

Difficulties about Christianity no Reason for Disbelieving it.

HERE is much talk nowadays about difficulties in religion. Different people treat them in different ways, some as a means of attacking religion, some as a cause of anxiety and fear lest, after all, religion should not be true. But in this they agree,¹ that both think that difficulties are against the truth of religion, or, which is the same thing, that if religion were true there would be no difficulties in

¹ Doubtless there are some who have never felt difficulties. This may be either because what is true and good in religion has filled their minds so much as to leave no room for other thoughts, or because education and habit have made things seem easy and familiar to them which would be hard to one who came to them for the first time, or because they are ignorant of the questions which are raised. In any case, they may and must be asked not to make their own freedom into a tyranny for others. If they treat with contempt others who have difficulties, they are certainly wrong for there *are* difficulties, as the greatest Christian minds have admitted, and they will do harm to those who, whatever others may say, do feel the difficulties, and can only be helped by being shown that they are no real objection to a reasonable faith.

it Now it is just this which we have to challenge , and to maintain, on the contrary, that *true religion is sure to have difficulties*

This does not mean that "the more difficulties the better , or that Christians do not mind how much the argument goes against them, and believe in spite of their reason Of course difficulties must be considered and fairly met, and each difficulty counts for something at least at first sight, in an argument against religion , and difficulties many enough or great enough would serve to crush religion But, side by side with this, it is true, as shall be shown, that there *must* be difficulties about religion so that a certain amount of difficulty of certain kinds need not encourage the enemies of religion nor disturb its friends

" There must be difficulties about religion " Let us only try to imagine the contrary Let us suppose some one coming to us with a religion which had no difficulties He must tell us all about God, so that nothing shall remain unexplained, and all about God's ways of working, so that they may lie spread before us just as a man's work might He must know all that we can ask about death and another world , he must be able to tell us, without any hesitation or any uncertainty, what is right, *i.e.* God's Will, in every case Now what should we think of a man who came profess

ing all this, this religion without difficulties? Probably we should feel disgust. And we should feel this disgust because there is nothing more offensive than to be "cock-sure," to have a pat answer on the biggest matters that the mind can think of, because there is absurdity in thinking that they do not pass the understanding of such beings as ourselves, and because it would be a new world altogether, and not the world God made for man, if true and false right and wrong were always as plain and distinct as north and south on a compass.

Does it not, then, already seem that our own judgment goes against a "religion without difficulties?" We should think the man who brought it a simpleton or an impostor.

But let us see a little more closely why we should be right in this feeling.

First, and before all else, religion gives a knowledge of God. If it is a religion made by men, it contains what men think they know of God out of their own minds, or from what they have seen in the world around them. If it is a "revealed" religion, like Christianity, it claims to contain what men believe that God has taught them about Himself. Either way it gives a knowledge of God. But now, according to nineteenth century ideas, if there is a God at all, what do we all agree that He

must be? Certain, the God of the Universe. Now, go to the astronomer, and get some idea of what, in point of space and extent, this Universe is. And then go to the geologist and learn the enormous figures by which we have to measure the lifetime of this little bit of the Universe, our Earth.

And then turn to the philosopher and let him explain the immense difficulties which there are about the things which enter into all our thoughts about the Universe, such things, I mean, as Space and Time and let him tell how impossible it is to imagine either that there was a point when time began, or that time has always been and never began, and so with space. And then ask yourself whether it is likely that the God of such a Universe should be one of whom we can have a knowledge

without difficulties. Or, once more, since God made minds and there must be in Him Mind or something greater than mind ask the students of the human mind whether that is an easy subject. And if our minds are difficult to understand, if they have depths which we can hardly sound, what shall we expect of the Divine Mind? Shall we expect a religion to teach us about that without difficulty? or shall we not rather think nothing more reasonable than the question, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" An Infinite Mind! A Being of Perfect Goodness! If there be such an

One, shall we understand His Ways "without difficulty"?

Why, take lower examples. Is there not always difficulty in understanding those who are above us—and the more difficulty the more they are above us? Suppose a man learned in science who gives a lecture or writes a book. We are not surprised, and we do not cavil if we find some parts hard or even unintelligible, we put it down to our ignorance. Or, if we have any confidence worth the name in a statesman, we trust him, even when we do not altogether understand, both because he knows more of the very complicated subjects which we call politics and also because he has a judgment which we feel deeper and sounder than our own.

Once more, if we think of those who have struck us most by their character, we shall feel that just because they are so much above us there is something in them, in their way of treating things, which we do not understand, and which yet awakens our curiosity and attracts our admiration, because we feel the reason of it to be that they look at things from a higher and better point of view than ours.

Would it not be strange, then, if what is true even of men who are higher and better, were not true of God, the Highest and Best, and if the know-

ledge of Him were without difficulty. We may indeed know Him and do just as (to compare great things with small) we know them. But in both cases there is what presses our understanding and so together with the knowledge there is difficulty.

II. But what has just been said of the difficulty of understanding the human mind and heart explains in another way why there must be difficulties in religion. The first subject of religion is God, the second subject is Man. And in dealing with this latter subject religion takes just the hardest and most mysterious parts of man, the parts most beset *with difficulty*. Any one who has looked at logic, the science of man's reasoning, or psychology, the science of mind, will not have found them without difficulty. If he has gone on to ethics, the science of man's right and wrong or of his moral nature, he will have found difficulty, perhaps increase upon him. And religion, which deals with man's spirit can hardly fail to raise the greatest difficulties of all. Man's feeling that he is utterly subject to a Power above, and yet that he is free, his fear and pain caused by having done wrong, and the possibility of that painful sense of wrong being cured, the way in which the Divine Spirit can touch his human spirit,—is it not enough to name these things in order to make us feel at once that religion must be accompanied by difficulty?

III It is the Christian religion which is particularly in question and there is another reason why such a religion must be attended with difficulty. The reason is that it is a historical religion meaning by this that it does not merely lay down principles or tell certain truths but it speaks of certain Facts or Events which happened at a certain time and upon which all Christians hope to live. Now so soon as a religion becomes historical it attaches upon itself the difficulties of history and we know what those are. Historical events have to be proved to us by evidence first the truth of them that they did occur next the colour of them that their look and their meaning was such and such. And we know what uncertainties there may be about this. The evidence may be incomplete or confused or doubtful. If it comes through people we may doubt their truthfulness or exactness or judgment. If it comes through records we may doubt whether they are what we call genuine or authentic. No historical event whatever is free from these difficulties. Napoleon Buonaparte is as prominent a figure as we have had in this century yet a clever man was able to show—of course in jest—how easy it would be to pick holes in the evidence on which we believe his history and even to make out a pretty good case for thinking that he never existed at all.

And if we take the case of Christianity, it must be possible to suggest that the Apostles and other first Christians were bad witnesses, or careless or ignorant ones, or that the four Gospels are not really trustworthy documents of the first age of Christianity, but belong to a later time, and so on. I say it *must be possible* to do this, simply because the events are historical ones, proved by witnesses whose witness is conveyed to us in document. I do not merely say this *has been* done in the case of the Events believed by Christians—that might be due to some weakness or defect in their particular evidence, but I say that any historical events, and the Christian, *as such*, must be liable to these difficulties¹

IV Only one other reason why there must be difficulties about Christianity. It is a reason connected with what even those who are not themselves Christians honour in Christianity, viz that it is a religion of conduct, a religion which influences the heart and life, a moral and spiritual religion. A very slight knowledge of the History of Religions

¹ The question will probably occur, Why did God allow His Religion to take a form which encumbered it with these difficulties? It is hoped that what has been said in the early part of this paper will suggest that we must be very imperfect judges of any such question about the why and the how of God's act. But such answer as the question seems to admit of will be the subject of another of these papers.

will show that this has by no means been the character of all religions, and a very slight knowledge of Christianity will show that this has been in the most special way the character of Christianity. And so it has always offered as its great sign or proof greater than miracles its power and influence visible in the bettered lives and ways of men. And as this is the great proof of Christianity, so its greatest difficulty is caused by the faults and inconsistencies of Christians. Their life and example was meant to draw men to Christ; their failure when they fail puts men off more than anything else. Let any one test this for himself. Let him think whether what has really perplexed him most has not been the shortcomings or inconsistencies of professing Christians. Or, to put it the other way, let him imagine the effect upon himself if all Christians whom he had known had been true to the example and teaching of Christ. Even as it is what disposes him most to Christianity is what he has seen in Christians which he has not seen in others. But what makes the difficulty is that there is not more of the same sort. If this difficulty were removed, if the witness of Christian lives were perfect and consistent, he would be able to make short work of other difficulties. He might not be able to solve them all, but he would feel that there was no doubt which side the truth lay. It is true,

then, to call this the greatest difficulty of Christianity. And what we have to notice is that it is an *invariable* difficulty. It is a necessary difficulty in a religion which in the first place makes goodness its aim and, in the second place, does not pretend to compel men to be good (which would be no real goodness) but to give them the means of being so. It is the very glory of Christianity to have made this experiment, to have committed itself to men, to have taken upon itself the risks of their misconduct and unfaithfulness by proclaiming that its aim was to make them good, and that by its power and success in this way it would be judged. But it is a glory which carries with it a burden of difficulty. Only if we see clearly that this is so, that there *must be* a difficulty of this kind, we shall be less surprised when we find that there *is* one.

Looking back over what has been said, it will be seen that difficulties about the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, or about the Son of God's becoming a child and man, fall under the first class. In the second may be placed those which touch man's free will, or the connection of his soul with a material body. The third hardly needs illustration—it includes most of the difficulties raised about the Scriptures. The fourth has for its simplest and most forcible instances the cases in which

each of us have felt encouraged or attracted by a consistent Christian life, or scandalized by the opposite. It includes also the cases in which parts of Christian history are thrown up against Christ *e.g.* the charge that Christians have been backward in giving up slavery or war, have persecuted one another, and so forth. All this belongs to a religion which trusts itself to weak and erring men. And in particular this reflection may be commended to the mind of those many persons who find the divisions among Christians and the varieties of teaching by Christians a main source of doubt and difficulty. Is not this difficulty lightened by seeing that such divisions and contradictions, springing up as they do from the errors or the faults of Christians, are the almost necessary lot of a true religion committing itself to human keeping? If we feel this, we shall be less daunted by this difficulty, and then we shall be prepared—first, to welcome the large amount of agreement in the great Christian truths which underlies the divisions, and, secondly, to try and satisfy ourselves where we may best find the Church such as our Lord designed it, with the teaching, means of grace, and so on, which are according to His Will.

One word in conclusion. It may be urged, "You have shown that there must be such difficulties, according to our human way of looking at things

But if religion comes from God could He not have cleared them all away, and given us a religion free from all difficulties, and, if He could, would He not, being a good God, have done so? We answer Possibly He could, though the less we say about God's thoughts and ways beyond what He has expressly taught us the wiser we shall be. Possibly He could, but this at least is certain that He could not have done it without upsetting and destroying and reversing all the ordinary conditions of human life. Man is made to find his way to the knowledge of truth and of goodness through many difficulties and much ignorance—to see it only dimly and in part, thus it was that God made him. We may presume that this was the state best for him, and if so may we not understand that a religion from God would not change that state, but would bring man the help and light which he needed for finding his way through it to Happiness Holiness, and God?

Can man know God?

A QUESTION like this belongs to a time when Religion has been a long time in the world. To many minds it would cause surprise, the existence of Religion as a fact would seem to make it unnecessary. But to others it occurs as the result of reflection on the history and progress of Religion in the past. It is not enough to them to say that Religion exists, and is therefore *possible* and real, for the simple reason that it is not everywhere the same. There is an endless variety and confusion in the forms of Religion which have at one time or another swayed men's minds. And yet still the constant claim of individual Religion is to be the only Religion—the sole channel of communication with God. It is clear at once that all cannot be true in the same exclusive sense, so that the question occurs very soon to the reflective mind—Are any true? And again—Can any of them be true? Can man know God at all? Difficulties in Science and Philosophy add their weight to those which the

history of Religion itself suggests, but these do not concern us here. We have to go back upon the history of Religion, and ask—(1) What is the general and most simple idea involved in it? (2) How can we justify this idea as pointing to a truth and as being something more than a mere fancy?

All Religion agrees in this, *viz* belief in a God. This which is the one point common to all religions, is also the occasion of their widest differences. For all men do not worship the same God, nor, again, do all worship one, many nations believe in a vast number of gods with special powers and duties, whom they worship from time to time as occasion demands. Again, there are several stages in the expression of the idea of God. A savage will worship perhaps some strange, unshapely stone, the Greeks at a higher level than this, worshipped the forces of Nature, which they figured in human forms, and both these forms of religion admit more gods than one. Then the Parsees still worship Fire, in all its forms, while, higher than these, is the idea of the Brahmans that God is a changeless Being present throughout the world, yet possessing no definite qualities.

It is difficult at first sight to see the connection between all these various forms of worship, yet there is an idea which runs through them all, from the worship of the savage upwards, and it is this—

that the world and all that is in it is dependent upon some ruling and sustaining Power. It must not be supposed that a savage, when he makes up his mind to worship his clumsy, odd shaped stone, thinks of it to himself as containing the Power which moves the world. The idea of such a Power only comes out later when Religion has grown by means of reflection. Yet it has been present all along, and has governed and guided the growth of Religion. To us the worship of material things or of a variety of gods seems incredible. We know too much of material things, and we cannot understand a confused horde of gods. We mean by a god a being whose power is not limited, and if we imagine more gods than one, they must limit one another's power. So we find it in the old stories they quarrel and fight, they marry and beget children, in fact, they are just like men without certain inconvenient restrictions like morality or order. And so we recognize the imagination of man working in the sphere of Religion, and see that such stories are very little less material than the stones which lower races worship.

Reasons like this are not only present to us,—they came into the minds of men who were born and bred in the lower forms of worship, indeed, ideas like these are the real grounds of religious development. The Greeks, for instance, we have

every reason to believe, worshipped stones in the very distant past, and then, as their experience widened, they no longer deified stones, but rather the great forces of Nature, but still they kept the stones they had once worshipped in the holiest places of the temples of their new gods. And then, later still even these gave them no satisfaction, and then highest minds gave up believing in them, and thought instead of some one Power on Whom the existence of the world depends. This, then, is the idea which is at work in the earlier days of Religion, and this is the permanent spiritual element which was concealed under the earlier forms of worship. The mind of early peoples is caught by their material surroundings—it makes an effort to see through Nature but stops half way, and worships the material things, as if that were the utmost effort it could make.

At this point our second question arises—Was this original effort wrong or not? Must we say that this very idea to which Religion seems to tend—this idea of a governing Power—was wrong? We will gladly surrender the stones and the stories but must the whole idea go that man can feel after God and find Him in Nature? It is true, no doubt, that out of these low forms of religion Philosophy has been evolved in the peculiar form of reflection on Nature which we call Philosophy.

has had its origin in early forms of Religion. But this is not the only result of them and we have no right to reject the religious side of the development unless we can show that man in his earliest effort after God made a step so false as to vitiate all that grew out of it.

We may admit at the outset that God is not to be perceived in Nature like earth or sky. So in arguing from earth or sky to a Power beyond man is going beyond the limits of his experience. Earth and sky are nothing but themselves and in representing them as the results of a Divine Power are only in the vague half formed suspicion which we may suppose a savage feels of something powerful that is present in them man is putting life into the picture before his eyes. The brightness of the sky, the variety of the earth's surface can be explained in modern times by Science. And yet man found God in them. How was this? It was because he exercised creative power. And a little thought will show that this is what man does in the exercise of some of the highest powers which make him man. As he creates a musical tone out of vibrations in the air and tremors of the nerves of his ears so through the glory of the world he sees God. Here too Science explains much. It tells us the number of vibrations in the ear necessary each second to produce the various tones, it tells us the condition

of the nerves which receive them but it cannot explain how the power and charm of music depend on material conditions such as these. Science can give us a true and accurate theory of the material conditions, and in so doing it appeals to man chiefly as a being possessing reason—the faculty which classifies and traces connections in the facts which the senses give. But in the enjoyment of music his whole being and not his reason only is active, he acts as a spirit. This case of music, of course does not cover a wide field. The idea of God is wider and loftier, but it is obtained in a very similar way. Belief in God answers a spiritual craving—a need which the whole man feels, and just as we should not allow that music was a mistaken inference from vibrations so we defend the position of those who through Nature reach God.

This is the reason then, why paganism and idolatry are wrong. They are untrue to the purpose of Religion. They only see what their eyes show them, and on that their fancy works and they build up their fabric of myth and legend. They have suppressed their own spiritual nature, and so they have gone wrong. And the modern Agnostic has done the same. He would restrict us simply and solely to the revelations of the senses, aided by the microscope and all the other methods and instruments which deal with the

external. And he, too, is so far wrong. Men will go wrong, then, as the heathen did of old and the Agnostic does now, whenever they try to make one half of their nature do the work of the whole. The spiritual side of man's nature must be represented.

The conclusion which I wish to suggest is this—that man can know God in Nature. It is in Nature that men have most often sought Him, but it is in Nature where men have most easily lost sight of Him, and of their own spiritual nature too. But the Religion of Nature in this sense is neither sufficient nor final: it must inevitably become degraded unless it takes in the moral and spiritual life as well. There was one religion which never lost sight of this. Whether it was built on the foundation of an earlier Nature worship can hardly now be said for certain, nor does it matter here. Nor, again, is it for our purpose important that the nation in which it found a home continually fell below its standard and wandered away to other gods. The claims of the spiritual nature were continually asserted against idol-worship by men to whom the Word of the Lord came. They answered at each stage the spiritual needs of their time, and in so doing foreshadowed a day to come when the Desire of all nations should appear, and the way be made plain for men to reach God. At length this happened so: and in the Incarnate

Christ we recognize the final answer to all needs and cravings of the human soul. In Christ the material human nature became a bridge instead of a barrier between us and God, in Christ, again, the eager expectancy of the Hebrew Prophets has received a satisfaction far beyond their hopes. But the Incarnation warns us also that reflection on Nature by itself cannot give us God, and this is the truth that Agnosticism has seized on and exaggerated. If we rest in the material, and hold back our will within the limits of our senses, then in truth man cannot know God. But reflection on Nature does not exhaust man's powers: he has a moral and spiritual life as well, and just as the intellectual, moral, and spiritual natures are welded together in one person, not simply joined together loosely, so his highest knowledge of the world, of himself, and of God will only be reached when every side of his nature has a share in his actions. Each side of him may attain truth of a one-sided character, if fully developed: but the knowledge of God—which is man's highest knowledge—comes only through an effort of his whole humanity.

NOTE.—There are two points in the above paper as to which there may seem to be some vagueness and which it may be worth while to clear up. The one is concerned with the degree of truth to be found in heathen mythologies and the other has to do with the way in which man acquires knowledge.

It is not meant that the God of Christianity is simply one of a class called Gods, any one possessing equal claims with all the others to be the true God. But it is meant that nothing will explain how these mythologies arose, except the existence of One true God after whom heathen peoples were "feeling, if haply they might find Him." Hence, if I may be allowed to quote words I have used elsewhere, "I do not think of the God whom I worship as one of a class, but I look upon the confused hordes of heathen deities as clumsy and partial efforts, which we now see to be attempts to reach the one and only true God. This will, I hope, also explain my position that this idea of God has been present through the whole process of development. Such an idea seems to me to be involved in the whole theory of evolution. Supposing we say that man's bodily organism has been developed out of lower forms this does not, I think, mean that he is not widely different from them, nor, again, should I think it right to say that he was merely the developed form of an anthropoid ape, because this tends to cover the fact that he is really different, and half suggests that he only differs from the ape in details. It would be truer, I think, to represent the lower stages as expressing in an incomplete form the climax of the development in man. This is what I mean by the 'presence of an idea all along' the changes which take place in the process are governed by the idea of that which is to come. So in religion the early heathen treatment of nature is only truly to be explained if we allow that it was an incomplete effort towards the apprehension of God."¹

With regard to the other point. On page 20 it is observed: "If we rest in the material, and hold back our will within the limits of our senses, then in truth man cannot know God. This must not be taken to mean that knowledge is attained independently of sense, but it is intended to exclude the doctrine of the materialists that knowledge is attained by sense only. In company with the whole of the idealistic branch of philosophy, it is maintained that the mind is in some way active in all forms of knowledge. In other words, in no knowledge of any kind does the mind passively receive impressions, whenever it knows, it acts. This is true of ordinary perception, still more so in the deeper forms of thought, most of all, as is urged in the paper, in the spiritual activity by which man finds God in nature."

¹ *National Reformer*

Free thinking

FREE-THINKING is an excellent thing. And if there are faults in those who call themselves Free thinkers it is not by any means they alone or they chiefly who are to blame. At the present moment, few would question the right to freedom of thought whether they choose or not to exercise it themselves. And yet it is not long since a different view prevailed. On the one side there was denunciation, invective, exclusion from society, and on the other side there naturally grew up a spirit of defiance and avowed hostility.

The world grows wiser as it grows older. People who are in earnest about Religion are coming to see that their former conduct was wrong. Their mistake was perhaps pardonable in its motive. We shut up poisons out of the way or label them with staring red labels to prevent them from being taken for harmless drugs. But once become really convinced of the truth of Religion and the denial of it will necessarily seem as bad as any poison,

and be treated accordingly. Now the tables are being turned, and if Christianity is being assailed with some animosity, the reason is precisely the same, because it is thought to be pernicious, and to hinder the welfare of the human race.

It would be very unfair if I were to complain of this. The method in question has been practised so much longer and so much more extensively on my own side of the argument that any such complaint would only recoil upon myself. It is time that we had done with these recriminations. What I really wish to point out is that, on whichever side it is practised, this mode of arguing must defeat itself—if, at least, its object is to get at truth.

It is quite impossible to understand any movement if one starts with the assumption that everything about it is bad, and that the only thing to be done is to paint it in the blackest colours, no matter where they come from. If I were to try, as too many have tried, to deal with a subject like Secularism in this way, I do not doubt at all that I should soon be hopelessly at fault. Ideas take hold much more by what is good in them than by what is bad. And if one looks only for the bad, and deliberately ignores the good, the result will be a very distorted picture.

I would say, then, by all means let us have Free thinking. Let things be taken for what they

are really worth, and if they do not stand the test of patient investigation let them be discarded. But if we are to have Free thinking it must be *equitable* Free thinking. It must not be Free thinking which calls itself by the name, but merely substitutes prejudice of one kind for prejudice of another, after the manner of Brownings—

“We called the chess board white we call it black.”

I am led to make these remarks by a book which is now lying before me “The Free thinkers Text book. Part II. Christianity its evidences, its origin, its morality, its history. By Annie Besant. Third edition [no date]. It is a book which has many merits. It is able, clear direct, and it certainly states its author's case in a telling and effective way. But the one thing that it does not do and that it seems to me to be fundamentally disqualified from doing, is to give the reader any true idea of Christianity.

The writer has been in part at the mercy of her authorities. Some of these are antiquated and obsolete, some are in a greater or less degree discredited. But even where she has had access to a trustworthy book, her one idea seems to be, not to appreciate the general drift of its argument, but to pick out from it any admissions which may serve her purpose.

And, further, she has taken her stand on the

narrow platform of one particular set of opinions in the nineteenth century, and from this she pronounces judgment on the sayings and doings of the past, with the least possible allowance for different habits of mind and ways of looking at things. I am willing enough to admit that the nineteenth century, from the standpoint of Mrs Besant, has its advantages, and that in some respects (not by any means in all) it is in advance of the first or second, but the early centuries are apt to get scant justice when they are judged by this standard, with nothing to temper its rigidity.

I make these criticisms only because it is necessary to go to the root of the matter, and because, if I think that Mrs Besant's book is extremely one-sided and ill balanced, it is incumbent on me to show how it comes to be so. I propose to try, in the following pages, not so much to reply to her as to state what I believe to be the true state of the case on the points which she has brought forward.

Fortunately, Mrs Besant has formulated the main body of her arguments in eleven distinct propositions. These, at least, present a clear issue, though I ought, perhaps, to warn the reader that historical questions are not always to be answered by a plain "Yes" or "No." There are shades and qualifications in truth which are not always so easy to apprehend as sweeping affirmatives or

negatives. Perhaps I may not always be able to express these in the brief space allowed me, though I shall endeavour, as far as I can, to do so, even at some cost of effectiveness, and I may, perhaps, return to some of the questions raised hereafter, I shall at least try to advance nothing that I am not prepared to substantiate.

POSITION A—*That forgeries, bearing the name of Christ, of the Apostles, and of the early Fathers, were very common in the primitive Church*

True, and a truth that should be borne in mind. But (1) the writer on whom Miss Besant is relying admits that fictions of this class were not by any means peculiar to Christianity, they were common at this period both among Jews and pagans. The spirit which now finds an outlet in the novel, then found an outlet in what were meant to be pious stories such as these. It was simply a feature in the literary habits of the time especially in the less cultured classes.

(2) It is also admitted that by far the larger proportion of the stories current had their origin outside the Church in Gnostic or Manichæan circles. This is becoming more and more evident as the Apocryphal Gospels and Acts are being collected and investigated.

(3) So far as the Church was concerned, though, no doubt, stories did get into circulation, and many of the Gnostic fictions were recast in a more orthodox form, still the practice was condemned by those in authority. Tertullian relates that the author of the "Acts of Thecla"—a Presbyter of the Church—being discovered and convicted, though he claimed that his motive was to add to the credit of St Paul by his invention, was deposed from his office.

(4) Mrs Besant has drawn up a formidable-looking list of some hundred and thirty works, which are put forward as possessing this apocryphal character. Really, the list is a strange mixture of heterogeneous elements, which it would take a long time to analyze thoroughly, and set in their proper places. (i) Some of the works mentioned are perfectly genuine and *bona fide* productions of the authors whose names they bear, *e.g.* the letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, and the "Shepherd" of Hermas. (ii) Some are genuine and *bona fide* works, which in the first instance circulated anonymously, but afterwards came to have the names of more or less eminent persons attached to them, such would be the (so called) Epistle of Barnabas, the Sermon attributed to Clement of Rome, the nine or ten works ascribed to Justin Martyr, etc. (iii) The "Gospels published

by Lucianus and Hesychius ' are only known to us from a single sentence of Jerome's, and there can be little doubt that what he meant was, not any apocryphal writings, but simply a recension or edition of the text of our present Gospels. Lucian's text of the Old Testament has been recovered, and only differs from other texts as one manuscript of the same book differs from another. (1) Of the remaining works, the great majority are Gnostic, Ebionite, or Manichæan compositions, for which we, as Christians, need not feel ourselves responsible. Even these are multiplied by a great amount of repetition—the same work appearing several times over under different names, *eg* Lentius (twice), Lenticius (twice), Lentitius, Leontius, Leonides, Leuthon, Seleucus, are only one and the same person, whose name has been corrupted in different manuscripts and in different languages (see Zahn, "Acta Joannis," p. 141, Erlangen 1880). (2) Many, too, of the books that are mentioned separately and in different places originally belonged to the same collection. For instance, it is probable that the above-named Leucius (according to the more correct spelling) was the author of the Acts of Peter, John, Andrew, Thomas, Paul, under the title "Travels of the Apostles" (also probably to be identified with the "Acts used by the Manichees"). I strongly suspect that this one collection will

account for not less than sixteen or seventeen of the entries in Mrs Besant's list, and there are other examples of the same thing on a smaller scale.

When all these deductions were made, the list would shrink to far more modest proportions, and even then it would represent the accumulated gleanings of many centuries of time and of many nationalities and languages—Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic, Persian.

POSITION B—*That there is nothing to distinguish the Canonical from the Apocryphal writings*

This is emphatically not the case. (1) As to the evidence. So soon as there is any considerable Christian literature at all, we find the process of sifting going on. An individual writes here and there makes use of an apocryphal book, but they never effected a real lodgment in the Church. Those which go so far as to be read at the public services were genuine books, like the Epistle of Clement and the "Shepherd" of Hermas, though it was thought—and posterity has fully endorsed the verdict—that there was a distinct interval between these and the books accepted as Canonical. (2) As to contents. Will Mrs Besant seriously maintain that the puerilities of the Apocryphal Gospels are in any sense comparable to the profound and far-

reaching sayings and acts of the Canonical? Even those who question the permanent value of the latter as a rule of conduct or philosophy of life, must at least admit that it is a philosophy of the most searching and comprehensive kind. To judge, however, from her argument, Mrs Besant appears to mean that some of the miracles in the Apocryphal Gospels are parallel to some in the Canonical. That is a different matter, and would hardly, I should think, in any case justify the broad conclusion drawn from it. I hope to return to the subject of miracles further on.

POSITION C—*That it is not known where, when, by whom, the Canonical writings were selected*

Mrs Besant thinks this "tremendously damaging." On the contrary, it is just this which gives the Canon its strength. It was not imposed upon the Church from without by the force of a single will, but it was the free and spontaneous product of a long process of testing, by that best of all tests—the test of "use and wont," or the practical experience of the great body of Christians. The Canon, as we have it, is simply the usage of the leading Churches carried on for more than three centuries before it was reduced to set rule. There is a value in the judgment of the masses, moving thus

silently, greater than in any formulated argument. And the more the Canon is studied, the more I think, shall we be led to recognize this unconscious wisdom.

The Christian may see a Divine guiding in the growth of the Canon, as he does in other things, but he does not therefore wish to exempt it from the operation of ordinary laws. Every step in the process is, indeed, strictly natural. We are not to suppose that with the death of the last Apostle the twenty-seven Books of our present New Testament were all collected into a single volume, and from thenceforth regarded by the whole body of Christians as authoritative. Even supposing that they had been so collected the degree and kind of authority attaching to them would have been uncertain. Let us think what the Books of the New Testament are. First, there is a group of histories, the author of one of which claims for it attention precisely on the grounds on which secular historians would claim it—because he has received his account from persons who were either eye witnesses of the facts or closely connected with them, and because he has himself taken great pains to arrive at the truth (Luke 1:2, 3). In the case of another, stress is laid upon his having himself witnessed an important event which he describes (John xix:35). The rest do not enter into these

explanations. They have certain 'good news' (Mark 1:1) which they wish to communicate, and they do so by a statement of the facts—that is all.

Then comes a large group of twenty-one letters, thirteen professing to be by a single writer. All of these letters are written to definite persons, and with a definite object, in many cases growing out of the needs and circumstances of the moment. Some few are more general in their contents, but all are written with direct reference to those by whom they are to be read.

Only one Book—the last in the collection—itsself claims an exceptional character, parallel to a part of the writings of the Old Testament. And this was just one of the Books which were received into the Canon with the greatest hesitation.

The immediate recipients of these letters and histories no doubt attached great weight to them on account of the importance of their subject matter, and of the persons from whom they proceeded. But they were not at once put upon a level with the Old Testament or regarded exactly in the light of 'sacred Books,' as the Church came afterwards to regard them. The first step was to make collections of writings which would exist at the outset only in a few copies, and those sometimes dispersed in outlying communities. These collections began to be made very early (2 Pet. 1:11).

16; Ignatius, "Ad Ephes.," 12; Marcion, as related by Epiphanius, "Hær.," xlii. 9—the date of Marcion is A.D. 140). Then the custom arose, and that, too, at an extremely early date, of reading aloud works that were thought to be so full of edification, at the public services; and it was probably because the Old Testament was also read in this way, that by degrees the writings of the New Testament and of the Old came to be placed upon the same footing.

In both respects there was necessarily a tentative period before it could be finally decided what Books should be adopted on this footing and what should not. There were other histories in circulation besides those which became afterwards Canonical. And of the letters written by Apostles or Apostolic men, some were addressed to more important or more central Churches, and some would probably be extant in a greater number of copies. These would form the nucleus of the first collections, and the others would come in and be added to them by degrees. On the other hand, it would not at first be determined exactly what writers should be invested with a permanent authority. Besides the Apostles themselves, there were others whose words carried weight, and had, perhaps, a special interest with particular Churches. These, too, would be read in some localities, and

it would be a question how far they should be adopted by the Church at large.

The facts that have come down to us correspond to these conditions. We soon find a solid body of writings recognized and acknowledged by all Christian communities. And outside this there is a fringe of other books, some now received as Canonical, and some now rejected, which enjoyed a certain amount of local use and acceptance, but in regard to which it was left for time to show whether that partial recognition would become universal.

I have given this outline of the growth of the Canon as a preliminary to discussing the next headings of Mrs. Besant's argument. I have not so much fault to find with these, except that they are a desultory attempt to minimize the evidence for the Christian Books, without, as far as I can see, any clear alternative view to substitute for that which it is sought to destroy. There is, indeed, no great amount of latitude possible to the candid student of early Christian history. And to a considerable extent it will be found that the facts, even as they are stated by Mrs. Besant, fit in sufficiently well to the framework traced above; but they will need supplementing.

POSITION D—*That before about AD 180 there is no trace of FOUR Gospels among the Christians*

Mrs Besant's book, I see, is not dated. It is evident, however, that it was written before the recovery of the rather considerable fragments of Papias's 'Diatessaron,' which have been found in an Armenian version of a work of Ephraim the Syrian. An account of this recovery has been given in English by Dr Salmon, in his Introduction to the New Testament pp 98-101, as well as by Dr Wace in a series of articles in the *Litpositor* for 1882. There is no longer any question that the "Diatessaron" was really a harmony of our four Gospels, and it carries back the evidence some ten years earlier than 180.

Let us, however, take our stand at the latter date, and survey the field from thence. Some time about 180 is the date assigned by the large majority of critics of all opinions to the famous Muratorian Fragment—the first systematic list of the Canonical Books. This is followed at a short interval by the lengthy work of Irenæus, "Against Heresies." In the next decade, 190-200, would fall the main part of the writings of Clement of Alexandria which are also of considerable length. Then from 200 onwards would come the numerous works of Tertullian. About the same period begin the unwearied literary

labours of Origen, and but a little later the more mediocre productions of Hippolytus. From 180 to 250 there is indeed, a large body of Christian literature far exceeding the contemporary pagan literature in bulk. What is the state of things in regard to the Canon which this literature reveals?

(1) The idea of a Canon is now firmly established. A line of demarcation is drawn—in some cases stronger, in some fainter, but in all a line of demarcation—between Canonical Books and those which are not Canonical. The New Testament Scriptures are treated as on the same footing with the Old. They are appealed to as authoritative in controversy, and commentaries have already begun to be written upon them. The first commentary of which we know anything definite is that by Heracleon the Gnostic, on St John probably before 180. This work is largely quoted by Origen.

(2) It is not yet determined finally what are to be the contents of the Canon, but there is a very great amount of agreement, embracing all parts of the Christian world. Irenæus, in the passage quoted by Miss Besant (p 258), regards it as little less than a "law of nature" that there must be four Gospels, neither more nor less. And Origen speaks of the four as "alone undisputed in the Church of God under heaven." Clement, Origen's predecessor, who is rather more free than the rest

in quoting from apocryphal works quote them with disjunction "We do not find this writing in the four Gospels that have been handed down to us, but in that according to the Egyptians"

The ten Epistles of St Paul which were recognized by Marcion, have now grown to thirteen or more strictly, perhaps, to twelve because there was still some uncertainty, on account of its slight and purely personal character about the beautiful little Epistle to Philemon. The rest are universally acknowledged as Canonical, and as St Paul's. The doubt as to its authorship caused a diversity of opinion between the East and the West as to the Epistle to the Hebrews. Besides these Epistles, 1 St Peter and 1 St John were also universally recognized. As to all these Books, the Canon was as firmly fixed by the year 180 as at any subsequent period of the Church's history.

(3) Although it is literally true to say that the evidence dates from about A.D. 180, in the case of the Gospels at least, if not also for the other Books, it virtually extends back some way further. For, besides the evidence of Tatian, it is clear, both from Irenæus and the Muratorian Fragment, that the state of things described is not one of recent institution. Within four or five years of 180 is the date at which Irenæus is actually writing, but he

is only giving expression to opinions which were evidently those of the Church to which he belonged as far back as his memory reached. And in like manner, the Muratorian Fragment is formulating and committing to writing what is evidently a strongly rooted usage. It would be no real straining of the evidence to carry it back inferentially a full generation. I do not know what others will think, but it seems to me that to have attained such a degree of unanimity on a question of so much importance, through the natural growth of Christian opinion, implies a rate of progress which is not slow, but very rapid.

I could add largely to this argument if I were to go into the question of the date of the oldest versions of the New Testament—the Latin, Syriac, and Egyptian—and the state of the text implied in these versions and in the body of writers of whom I have been speaking. But that is a subject rather for professed scholars than for popular handling in a paper like this. Suffice it to say that the divergences in the text of the New Testament which are proved to have existed towards the end of the second century, furnish conclusive evidence that even at that date the Books have a long history behind them and have already passed through many phases of transcription, so much so that the date which we usually assign

to them is not by any means too early to allow for all the minute verbal changes which have been introduced.

POSITION E—*That before that date (A D 180), Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are not selected as the four Evangelists*

Mrs Besant herself gives little more than half a page to this position, and hardly distinguishes it from that which goes before and that which follows. From the Muratorian Fragment onwards, the references to the four Evangelists by name are abundant, but it is true that in the previous literature they are not mentioned, except in the one allusion by Papias, of which I shall speak immediately.

POSITION F—*That there is no evidence that the four Gospels mentioned about that date (A D 180) were the same as those we have now*

Here, too, I do not quite understand Mrs Besant's argument. The identification of the four Gospels in the great body of writings of which I have been speaking is as precise and definite as possible. The Muratorian Fragment itself is perfectly explicit as to St Luke and St John, the part

relating to St Matthew and St Mark had unfortunately been torn off. About the same time, the Fourth Gospel is quoted as St John's by Theophilus of Antioch. There is also now no doubt whatever as to the contents of Tatian's "Diatessaron." Miss Besant does not, however, discuss the evidence really bearing on the date 180, but goes on to speak of the earlier evidence—Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr, Hegesippus, and the Epistle of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons. I fail to see how this comes under her own heading. Not that the point is of any importance, because it is only carrying on the argument, as we shall have to carry it to the next stage. We may, therefore, combine this with the next two heads, which seem to cover much the same ground.

POSITION G—*That there is evidence that two of [the Gospels] were not the same*

POSITION H—*That there is evidence that the earlier records were not the Gospels now esteemed Canonical*

The first of these positions is simply a criticism of the well known statements of Papias respecting the Gospels of St Matthew and St Mark. This, again, is a question which belongs rather to

professed scholars, and to a different arena. The statements of Papias have been much discussed but as yet there is no complete agreement as to their bearing. In two masterly articles contributed to the *Contemporary Review* in 1875 Bishop Lightfoot contended for the identity of the writings mentioned by Papias with our present Gospels. Writing independently myself, about the same time I felt compelled to take a different view, which I do not as yet see my way to retract though I can only regard it as provisional. Dr Salmon, in a recent work of much ability, agrees substantially with Bishop Lightfoot. But what I would really submit is that the question is one that does not affect the main issue either way. The notice in Papias is an antiquarian notice, derived apparently from the Presbyter John, and going back to the very beginning of Evangelical composition. If he does not refer to our present Gospels as we have them he at any rate refers to the materials out of which they were constructed. In any case, as the preface to St Luke shows us, our present Gospels were preceded, not only by a period of oral tradition, but also by some written documents, and whether Papias is describing them earlier or their final form, does not make any great difference. The question must be solved, not by accumulation of external testimony—all that could be done in

that way has been done already—but by the internal analysis of the Gospels, and there is room here still for further investigation

Positions I and H are the negative and positive sides of each other: the one maintains that the Gospels used at this early period were *not* our Canonical Gospels, and the other maintains that they *were* some other Gospel or Gospels now lost. I cannot, of course, assent to this conclusion in any but the most qualified and partial sense, and I have argued against it at length in my book on the 'Gospels in the Second Century' (London, 1876). Miss Besant has done me the honour to quote rather largely from this but she has quoted only the admissions which seemed to make in favour of her view, without noticing the general drift of the argument as a whole. I do not now intend to recede from my own words. I think that they will be found to be perfectly consistent with the sketch of the growth of the Canon as it has been outlined above. There are, however, some further remarks that I think ought to be added.

(1) The difficulty and obscurity of this early period arises largely from the scantiness of the Christian literature belonging to it that has come down to us. The whole extant Christian literature from A.D. 90 to 160 would be easily got into a

single small octavo volume. Nor is any part of it of such a kind that we should have special reason to look for quotations in it from the Books of the New Testament. It is purely a matter of accident, or of the individual bent of the writer, whether the quotations in it are many or few. In the short Epistle of Polycarp, quotations are numerous, in the longer Epistles of Ignatius, they are rare, but only because Ignatius had his own way of expressing his own thoughts, while Polycarp fell naturally into forms of expression that had been used before him.

(2) Small as this literature is, it has increased in bulk in recent years. The discovery and publication of the "Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles" has added a number of quotations from the Gospels, similar in character to those in Clement of Rome and Polycarp. Besides this, the whole course of critical discussion since Miss Besant wrote and since I myself wrote, has gone to strengthen the proof of the use of the Canonical Books. There has been a great deal of discussion round the use of the Gospels, and especially the Fourth Gospel, by Justin. And this use seems to me to have been proved to demonstration by the two eminent Unitarians, Professor James Drummond (in the *Theological Review* for 1877) in England, and Professor Ezra Abbot (now, alas! gone to his rest)

in America. The limitations which our countryman, Dr Edwin A. Abbott, sought to place on Justin's use of the Fourth Gospel have hardly been maintained (see Salmon, 'Introduction,' p. 94, f). In looking at the present position of the question as summed up in the recent "Introduction" of the thoroughly free-thinking" critic, Dr H. J. Holtzmann, I may regard it as practically admitted on all hands that Justin used the three Synoptics, and admitted also that he used St John, though it is contended that he did so with somewhat more reserve. The current of opinion in England and America sets strongly in favour of the view, which is not, however, shared by Dr Holtzmann, that the Fourth Gospel was used by Basilides in A.D. 125-130. But most important of all the contributions to the study of this period is Bishop Lightfoot's magnificent edition of the Epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp, described by a leading German critic, Dr Harnack, as the "most learned and careful Patristic monograph" in the present century. Henceforward, as Dr Harnack points out, there need be no hesitation in using the full seven Epistles as certainly the work of Ignatius, or in regard to the genuineness and integrity of the Epistle of Polycarp. The last ten years have, in fact, seen many additions to our knowledge, from the recovery of Tatian's "Diatessaron" to that of the

Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles in the way of material, and from Ezra Abbot to Salmon and Lightfoot in the way of criticism, and it is not too much to say that every step in advance has served either to enlarge or confirm the evidence for the Canon of the New Testament

(3) As to the sort of freedom which is observed to exist in the earliest quotations from the Gospels, the explanation which I should be myself disposed to give of it is this. I have now little doubt that ultimately the quotations rest upon our present Gospels, because distinctive features are reproduced from each just where they are most peculiar. In the case of Justin this is most marked, and the proof of the use of the Canonical Gospels most decisive. But I conceive that the contents of these Gospels—in particular passages from the Sermon on the Mount—were commonly used in the catechetical instruction given to converts and children, and so they got to be familiar, as such passages are at the present day, and they were quoted freely from memory, without direct reference to the manuscripts of the Gospels. It is possible that, where Clement and Polycarp quote the same passage somewhat similarly, Polycarp may have had the letter of Clement before him.

(4) In any case, as has been repeatedly argued, even supposing that Apocryphal Gospels were used,

when the use of them comes to be examined, it is found that their contents are practically indistinguishable from those of the Canonical Gospels. Let any one read the summary of the life of Christ extracted from the writings of Justin—I do not say as it is given in my own book, but as it is given by Mrs. Besant (pp. 306–308)—and he will see that, not only are the main outlines absolutely identical, but that even the details are, with the most trivial exceptions, the same. If Justin is not quoting from our Gospels, then all that can be said is that we have another witness still to the history. I do not believe that we have such a witness. I do not believe that Justin used one document or set of documents, and that his disciple Tatian used a wholly different set, or that between Justin and Irenæus the first document or set of documents passed out of sight entirely. The whole hypothesis that Justin did not use our four Gospels seems to me utterly untenable; but if he *did* use another document differing from them, the only result would be that we should have five or more distinct witnesses instead of four. Mrs. Besant is quite welcome to that alternative if she prefers it.

(5) I have said, however, that the Christian literature from A.D. 90 to 160 is very limited in quantity. And, humanly speaking, it is a matter of accident what Books happen to be quoted in it.

and what do not—the absence of quotation going a very short way indeed to prove that a Book did not exist. But when we look at the New Testament as a whole I think we shall be surprised to see even in this accidental way how much of it does receive the clearest attestation. The Epistle of Clement of Rome falls about the year AD 95, and it contains indisputable quotations from Romans and Hebrews and a direct and indisputable reference to I Corinthians. The Epistle of Polycarp in like manner short as it is contains an express reference to Philipians and certain allusions to Romans I Corinthians Galatians Ephesians I Timothy I St Peter and I St John. Justin too has a direct reference by name to the Apocalypse. I am putting aside all that can possibly be considered doubtful and confining myself strictly to points about which there can be no question whatever. I should be perfectly willing myself to take my stand in argument upon these documents alone or even upon some three or four of these. I do not think that we need any more to prove that Christianity is what we suppose it to be.

POSITION I—*That the Books themselves show marks of their later origin*

This is inferred from phrases scattered throughout the Gospels which show that the writers were

ignorant of local customs, habits, and laws, and therefore, could not have been Jews contemporary with Jesus at the date when He is alleged to have lived. I am sorry to be obliged again to meet this position with a direct and emphatic negative. The proofs of the contrary of what is asserted are overwhelming. And they constitute as I venture to think an argument of immense force—an argument that in some quarters is not perhaps even yet appreciated as fully as it ought to be. The truth is that the period to which the history of the Gospels relates was unique in the records of Christianity. There was just at that time a meeting of conditions which never occurred again. Christianity grew out of Judaism, but its separation from Judaism, when once it was fairly begun, progressed with extreme rapidity. From the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, the little community of Jewish Christians dwindled into insignificance, while the Church of the Hellenists and Gentiles kept advancing with leaps and bounds. From the fall of Jerusalem onwards, Christianity 'lost touch' with the popular aspirations of Judaism. Christian writers were no more able to enter into the thoughts and feelings of a Jew. Yet how marvellously the Gospels reproduce these thoughts and feelings and aspirations—these hopes of a Messianic time, with which the heart of the nation was throbbing! How

vividly do they bring home to us the state of doubt and suspense, mingled with expectant longing, which must have inevitably greeted a claimant to the title of "Messiah"! "Art thou the Coming One [an expressive name, which is constantly re-appearing in the original, though it is often lost in our translation], or are we to look for another?" "How long dost Thou hold us in suspense? If Thou art the Christ, tell us plainly." "Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said. Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah: and others, Jeremiah, or one of the Prophets." The notion that Elijah must appear before the coming of the Messiah is frequently referred to. And the popular mind applies all the other tests that it knows to the Messianic claims. There was something about the acts and teaching of the Prophet of Nazareth that did not easily square with its anticipations. "Why baptizest thou then if thou art not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the Prophet?" "Can it be that the rulers indeed know that this is the Christ? Howbeit, we know this Man whence He is: but when the Christ cometh, no one knoweth whence He is." "What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" "Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth no

Prophet." "Hath any of the rulers believed on Him, or of the Pharisees? But this multitude which knoweth not the Law are accursed." "Will He go unto the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?" Sometimes we get a glimpse of the form of the national expectation, as it was entertained before Christ came; and sometimes we see how the populace wished to force their own conception upon Jesus against His will, and how the Disciples are perplexed and disappointed at the non-fulfilment of their hopes: "Simeon . . . was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel;" Anna "spake of Him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (*i.e.* to all her acquaintance who shared the common idea that the long-promised Deliverance was at hand); Jesus, "perceiving that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him King," withdrew into the mountain; "We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel;" "Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

In all these touches the Gospels are like an instantaneous photograph, which seizes and prints for ever the shifting features in a scene that lasts as it is only for a few moments, and then disperses, never to be combined together in the same relations again. Compared with these, the allusions to local manners and customs, graphic as they are, take a

secondary place though it is safe to say that no later generation of Christians would or indeed could have reproduced them. With such allusions the Gospels positively teem: the standing feud between Jews and Samaritans, the impropriety of a man conversing alone with a woman, the Rabbinical schools and titles of respect, the synagogues, with their officers and the details of their services, the local courts, the great Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, the picture presented by the temple courts, the money-changers, the offerings of the rich and of the poor, the funnel-shaped chests of the treasury, the Feast of the Encænia or Dedication falling in winter, the Feast of Tabernacles and its ceremonies, the beautiful gate, Solomon's colonnade, Gabbatha where the tessellated pavement was on which the Roman governor sat in the chair of justice, the chiliarch of the Roman garrison by the side of the provost of the temple police chosen from among the Levites, the sabbath day's journey, the caravan of pilgrims from Galilee avoiding the direct route through Samaria, the provincial Galilæan dialect, the banditti that infested Palestine at this date, and a thousand other traits of home and country life, which it would be needless and wearisome to enumerate.

Again, passing to the Acts, I might appeal to the many instances in which recent research has

confirmed the minute accuracy of the historian, especially in those very delicate points—the peculiarities of municipal and local constitution I might appeal to Sergius Paulus, the *proconsul* (now known to be the proper title, though this was at one time denied), to the Cesnola Inscription, which contains the very name of ‘ Paulus [pro]consul , ’ to the asarchs and theatre of Ephesus, as illustrated by Mr Wood’s discoveries, to the duumvirs of Philippi, who call themselves, as they might legally do, by the high sounding name of “ prætoris ” (R V margin), to the politarchs of Thessalonica (the inscription relating to whom is now in the British Museum), to the “ protos ” of Melita, and the inscription which attests the name, to the account of the character and death of Herod Agrippa I, of Agrippa II, of Bernice and Drusilla, of Felix and Festus, to the details of St Paul’s vow, of his voyage and shipwreck, and the like

I do not claim for the historian infallibility I think it possible that there may be a mistake and even an anachronism here and there But, on the strictest reckoning, these bear but a very small proportion to the mass of particulars that receive the amplest verification The few examples that Mrs Besant has collected will hardly bear examination Much more is now known about Cyrenius or Quirinius than when Strauss wrote, and though

I will not undertake to say, with Zumpt and with Aiderson Farai, that the Evangelist has been proved to be exactly right, I think that he is far less wrong than has been supposed, and there is so much of which we are ignorant about the circumstances, that I should hesitate to lay stress even on what is still unaccounted for. 'Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace,' Miss Besant rightly thinks would be out of place in the mouth of John the Baptist, but the words are not those of the Baptist, but are thrown in by the Evangelist after his manner elsewhere. It was customary for a condemned criminal to carry his own cross, and we can well imagine that the phrase, 'bear his cross,' would be suggested by the wholesale executions that took place under the Romans (Nero crucified two thousand at once), without direct reference to the Passion of Christ. "The word 'gospel,' " Miss Besant says, 'was not in use among Christians before the end of the second century, yet we find it in Matt i 23, iv 23, etc.' The Epistles of St Paul are, of course, full of it, but Miss Besant has probably been misled by some statement (which even then would not be correct) as to the use of the word for a written document. Next, Miss Besant objects to the occurrence of the word "legion" in Mark v 9 and Luke viii 30, "in Galilee and Peræa the people

spoke neither Latin nor Greek, but Hebrew, or a dialect of it ' Yet this is just one of the words with which they must have been familiarized through the Roman occupation, the probable site of the ancient Megiddo is to this day called *Lejjûn*. Many commentators, including the able German Meyer, translate the Greek of Matt xxi 5, 7 (as well as the Hebrew original), "a colt, *even* the foal of an ass. I am not sure of this, but I am afraid that, if the Evangelist did disregard the Hebrew idiom, that would not by any means prove that he was not a Jew. Miss Besant gives her own version of the trial-scene, and then contends that it is contrary to Roman justice and dignity. That is the whole of her case, and I leave it to the reader to say what it is worth.

POSITION J—*That the language in which [the Gospels] are written is presumptive evidence against their authenticity*

A scholar would never have brought this objection, and I am surprised that a person of Mrs Besant's ability should urge it with so little thought and so little inquiry. She argues that eight years, nineteen years, twenty-seven years, after the death of Jesus the Apostles were still preaching to Jews

But tradition, as well as internal evidence, places the composition of the earliest Gospels about 64-68, and by that time (whatever may have been the case with the Jews of Palestine) the vast majority of Christians spoke Greek. Yet the First Gospel, which was probably written among the mixed population of Peiæa, has a Hebraizing turn and a scholar will find traces of Hebraistic documents in the Third Gospel and the Acts, as he will also find a Hebrew basis in the style of the Fourth Gospel. The last three Gospels seem to have been written in the first instance solely for Gentiles.

POSITION K—*That they are in themselves utterly unworthy of credit, from (1) the miracles with which they abound, (2) the numerous contradictions of each by the others, (3) the fact that the story of the Hero, the doctrines, the miracles, were current long before the supposed dates of the Gospels, so that these Gospels are simply a patchwork composed of older materials*

This is an objection of a different order. It opens out large questions, to some of which I may, perhaps, return at a future time. I will, however, here indicate the course that I think a Christian should take in reference to them.

1. Miracles.

This is the real objection to Christianity. All others that are of any weight ultimately resolve themselves into this. In order to bear out this one objection against miracles, many a one has allowed himself to take refuge in the most irrational hypotheses, that do violence to history at every turn.

If I were arguing the question of miracles with an open-minded inquirer, the line that I should take would be this: I should advise him to be careful to start from absolutely unassailable ground. For this purpose and at this preliminary stage the Gospels would fall into the second line. I should begin, not with them, but with the Epistles of St. Paul. And inasmuch as some of these, too, have been questioned, I should confine myself, in the first instance, to what are sometimes called the four "great Epistles"—Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians. Among all solid scholars, of whatever way of thinking, these Epistles are acknowledged unreservedly as above suspicion. I should invite the inquirer to read through carefully the description of a Christian community, and the extraordinary phenomena which habitually took place in it, in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. St. Paul is not here proving anything. He has no motive

for exaggerating. His object is rather to tone down manifestations which were apt to pass the bounds of sobriety. But he does assume throughout that there *were* manifestations, which he takes as a matter of course, though to us they seem most extraordinary. These manifestations were very varied in their kind. "gifts of healings, ' workings of miracles," "prophecy," "discernings of spirits," "[divers] kinds of tongues, "interpretation of tongues," are all placed on the same footing. To some of these, no doubt, analogies may be found in other examples of great religious excitement. I do not for a moment deny the existence of such analogies, though I think that they fall considerably short of the facts which St Paul describes with so much circumstantiality, and yet with such evident unconsciousness that his description contained anything questionable. Looking steadily at these two chapters, I say (1) that I am absolutely certain that the facts referred to in them were real, (2) that to account for them our conception of Nature must be greatly enlarged, (3) that they are directly connected with a wave of unprecedented religious enthusiasm.

When the person whom I have supposed to be inquiring into the truth of Christianity had satisfied himself about this, I should invite him to direct his attention to a number of other allusions, all

equally unconscious and matter-of-fact, that are scattered over the four Epistles. I should beg him to turn to another very remarkable description in 1 Cor i 3-5. The Apostle is at Ephesus, his readers are at Corinth, yet we seem to see him drawing himself up as if to extreme tension, and deliberately, by an exertion of will, causing effects to take place upon a certain individual at Corinth, which he calls handing over the offender "to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. To me it is impossible to read such passages along with others such as Rom xv 19 and 2 Cor xii 12 without feeling that St Paul was perfectly aware that he possessed and had repeatedly exercised, and could exercise at will preternatural powers. And when I compare these passages with another group, such as 1 Cor vi 28, 29 and Gal iii 5, it seems clear that the powers which he possessed himself, he knew to be widely distributed amongst other Christians.

When all this was fully realized, I should then be emboldened to take a further step, and I should direct attention to the opening paragraph of 1 Cor iv 1-11. Let it be remembered that this chapter was written within thirty years of the event to which it relates, when numbers of people were alive who could contest its statements if they were controvertible. These statements are made in a

manner that, from their very plainness and directness, strikes the reader with a sense of peculiar solemnity and gravity. It is evident that St Paul is well aware of the responsibility which attaches to him in making them. He puts them forward as nothing new, but as handed down by a continuous chain from the time to which they refer. He appeals to not one, or two, or three, or four, but to a multitude of witnesses, many of them then living, who asseverated that Christ rose from the dead, and that they had seen Him. There cannot I think, be the smallest question that the Resurrection of Christ was universally believed amongst Christians from the very first days after it was said to have occurred. This again, is another fact than which I do not think that the rising or setting of the sun is more certain.

Into the philosophy of these marvellous phenomena I do not enter. What is their relation to God's ordinary government of the universe I do not feel competent to say. I do not myself believe that they are, in the strict sense, "breaches" of natural law. I believe that if we could see as God sees, we should become aware of links and connections, at present hidden from us, binding together the mighty organism of acts and processes into a mysterious but still harmonious whole. I am also not prepared to say that, if the miracles of the New

Free thinking

Testament had been described by competent observers in the nineteenth century instead of the actual eye witnesses in the first there would have been a perceptible difference in the narrative. All these concessions I should be willing to make and I could understand others pressing the matter further than I should care to press them myself. But on one simple proposition I should take my stand as a rock of certainty amidst much that is uncertain *Miracles did actually happen*

2 *Contradictions*

These will probably be felt by Christians to be of less importance than many might have supposed a few years ago. When the Scriptures were approached with a preconceived idea of their infallibility—an idea not derived from the Scriptures themselves—they were judged by an altogether unnatural standard and every mole hill in them became a mountain. But now that there is a much greater readiness to let the Scriptures interpret themselves to look candidly for what they *are* instead of laying down laws as to what they *ought* to be we have become less careful to answer our questioners in this matter. We think it a Christian's duty certainly not to exaggerate any apparent contradictions. It is better for him where he may fairly do so to suspend his judgment and to say

not so much "This is a contradiction, as I do not see how these things are to be reconciled. That is at least the more modest course. But we would not have any one strain his conscience, or resort to forced and unnatural methods of explanation. Perhaps there is a certain amount of wholesome scepticism which it is well to practise towards all explanations of historical difficulties, not confined to those in the New Testament alone. Our knowledge of all events in past ages is extremely limited. In the background of what we know, the few scattered points of light, is an immense tract of darkness which will never be rolled away. And it is far better to recognize this condition of things from the first, and abstain from dogmatizing either in the way of assertion or of denial.

If we approach the New Testament records with sober and unforced expectations of what we are to find there, then I think we shall find the apparent contradictions between the different narrators not at all greater in amount than would be natural in persons situated towards each other and towards the events as they are supposed by Christians to be situated. If I were to grant Miss Besant all those which she has enumerated, I should still not assent to her conclusion that the Gospels are to be "rejected as historical narratives." It will be seen on examination that many of them are

simply due to our own ignorance. We do not know what is the source of the birth-registers in St. Matthew and St. Luke. When we remember how many ways the Jews had of reckoning descent, it is possible that they may be reconcilable. If they were not—and that is a mere supposition—all we could say is that the Evangelists were following different, and in one or the other case mistaken, authorities. Just as little do we know, and it is vain to guess at, the succession of events preceding the Nativity. We have as little certainty as to the exact relationship implied in the "brethren of the Lord." I, for one, should not attempt an exact chronological or historical harmony of the events connected with the Birth of Christ. The data for this are insufficient. The Temptation is a story so penetrating and full of meaning, that I am sure that there were facts corresponding to it; but I believe that those facts were spiritual, and not physical. Much has been made of the differences in the four accounts of Peter's denial. They are no greater than might be heard any day in any of our English courts, without casting a doubt on the good faith of any of the witnesses. There were many coming and going, and general hurry and confusion, with the consequence that different versions might easily be given of the same event. The length of our Lord's ministry is another point

on which the data are imperfect ; the clearest and most definite landmarks seem to be given by St. John. Both the Synoptic Gospels and St. John are very fragmentary in their narratives ; and if Mrs. Besant will read through a good commentary (like Canon Westcott's or Dr. Plummer's) on the latter, I' think she will find that it is not nearly so impossible as she supposes to fit the fragments into each other.

The method of investigation that seems to give the best promise of results is not that of haggling over supposed discrepancies, but a systematic analysis of the different sources of the Synoptic narrative. If that part of it which is common to all three Gospels carries with it the most weight, it is not, as used to be thought, because we have here three distinct sources, but because its presence in all three points to a single source older than them all, and one on which it would seem that the primitive Church placed a sort of *imprimatur*. The whole question of the relation of Synoptic Gospels, however, though much labour has been expended upon it, is still some way from having received its final solution.

3. *Anticipations.*

"There are two mythical theories as to the story of Jesus, which," Mrs. Besant thinks, "demand our

attention: the first that of which Strauss is the best known exponent, which acknowledges the historical existence of Jesus, but regards Him as the figure round which has grown a mythus, moulded by the Messianic expectations of the Jews; the second, which is indifferent to His historical existence, and regards Him as a new Hero of the ancient sun-worship, the successor of Mithra, Krishna, Osiris, Bacchus, etc."

I believe that Strauss's theory is now universally given up in the land of its birth. It is recognized that it may contain in detail some small element of truth. It is probably true that there were some Christians who argued: "Jesus was the Messiah; this or that feature was to be found in the Messiah; therefore, the same feature was also to be found in Jesus." But that assumes nine-tenths of the belief in order to account for the remaining tenth. It assumes the fundamental proposition that "Jesus is the Messiah," without giving the slightest account of how that proposition came to be accepted. Unless the personality of Jesus had been a very remarkable one, He would never have been regarded as the Messiah at all. Our Gospels certainly explain to us that His personality was most remarkable, but all this has to be postulated before Strauss's argument comes in.

Another enormous difficulty which his theory

has to contend with is the difference—nay, antagonism—between the Messianic expectation as it was current among the Jews and the Messianic character of the Jesus of the Gospels. The idea underwent a complete recasting in the hands of Christ. No one could have foreseen this recasting. A Christian will think that only one Mind could have conceived it. To explain the Person by the idea is to invert the order of things. In Christianity the idea is explained by the Person. Accordingly, though the theory of Strauss may be invoked here and there to account for some slight detail in the conception prevalent in the Church, it fails altogether to go to the centre of the problem ; and, as a matter of fact, it was felt that, except in regard to these small details, the explanations given by Strauss were for the most part very forced and inadequate.

But, compared to the other theory, that of Strauss was reason itself. The history of Jesus a form of sun-worship ! Mrs. Besant appears to write seriously, but this is only another example of the superstitions to which minds that think themselves emancipated are liable. I will venture to say that a superstition so gross is not believed by the simplest Christian in the valleys of the Tyrol or the streets of Naples. I have no wish to be hard on Mrs. Besant, but I am afraid that our English culture is apt to be

sadly unequal. Mr. Matthew Arnold used to be shocked to think that some one could be found to write two thick volumes to prove that "Maho" was the little horn of the he goat that figures in the eighth chapter of Daniel, and that the Pope was the great horn. The notion about sun worship belongs to the same category.

The state of the case is this. Most young sciences sow their wild oats. The comparative study of religions is a very young science, and it has not yet sown all its wild oats. A plentiful crop has grown round this idea of sun worship. It ought not to be necessary to say that there cannot be the slightest analogy between religions that stretch back into the immemorial past, centuries before the first appearance—I do not say of a history, but even of a literature, and one like Christianity, which has admirably attested documents within thirty years of the death of its Founder. Let Miss Besant try to represent to herself the process by which the teaching, *eg.*, of Romans or 1 Corinthians became transformed from an original sun worship, and she will see into what absurdities she has been betrayed.

I turn to the next section of her book, and I find another idea still more monstrous (p. 357). Surely no one with a glimmering of the critical spirit would dream of connecting the Christian use of the

cross or crucifix with the symbols there mentioned. It will be kindest to Mrs. Besant not to waste words over this. But I think that I need not say more, in order to show that it is not enough to possess a vigorous English style, a clear head, and a certain amount of ill-assorted reading, to make a competent judge of the evidences of Christianity.

I am sorry to find myself drawn into the criticism of the last few pages. I would have avoided it if I could. There are other parts of Mrs. Besant's book which deserve, and I hope have received, more respectful treatment. I have no complaint to make against her as a "Free-thinker." I claim to think freely myself. I have no right to complain of her as an opponent of Christianity. In that capacity I would gladly do my best to reason calmly with her. But she ought not to think that any stick or stone is good enough for a missile, and that it does not matter what sort of arguments are used, so long as they serve their turn.

I have sufficiently indicated above the line that I should wish to take with one who was more serious in the search for truth. I hope some day to return to this, in a manner less disturbed by controversy.

What the First Christians thought about Christ.

IN examining any question which turns upon a matter of history, the first thing to be done is to find out those documents which are at once nearest to the alleged facts in point of time, and the authorship of which is clear and undisputed

There is no need for lengthy argument to prove that the value of evidence increases in direct proportion to the shortness of the interval by which it is separated from that which it attests. This is especially true of the earlier ages. For, besides the general danger of a story getting altered in process of transmission, there was also a special danger affecting the history of ideas and doctrines. The ancients were not so sensible as we are now of the difference in the ways of thinking prevalent at different times, and writers were apt to mix up the ideas of their own times with those of the time which they were describing.

Another characteristic of ancient times was that less care was taken, than would be now, that

writings really proceeded from the authors whose names they bore. Public opinion did not condemn the use of fictitious names to the extent that it would with us. And hence writings got into circulation which were not the genuine work of their reputed authors. Works originally anonymous came to have the names of eminent persons attached to them, and, in some instances, the real authorship was disguised from the first.

A more jealous care under both these heads is the distinctive feature of modern historical inquiry. It does not take its authorities indiscriminately but it begins (where it can) by choosing those which are not only probably but demonstrably early and genuine, it makes of these a standard by which to judge of others, it bases its first conclusions entirely upon them, it uses them as so many "fixed points" from which to stretch out into the obscurer regions beyond, and it works its way gradually from these, making good every step as it proceeds.

Now, in so far as Christianity is an historical faith, it too is not exempt from the same conditions as any other branch of ancient history. The same laws and the same methods must be observed in connection with it. Here the first "fixed point" that the investigator comes to is that supplied by

what are sometimes called the four great Epistles ' of S. Paul—Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians, or, to take them in what is more probably their chronological order, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans. These are not quite the earliest of Christian writings that have come down to us, because they were preceded by 1 and 2 Thessalonians, but they are considerably more important than those two brief Epistles, and their genuineness is more entirely unquestioned. In these four Epistles we have at once documents that are extremely early, dating in all probability from the years 57 and 58, or less than thirty years at the longest reckoning from the Ascension, and which are also, beyond all reasonable doubt, the actual work of the author whose name they bear, the Christian Apostle S. Paul.

In any critical study of Christianity it is best to begin with these Epistles, not because we have any right to assume beforehand that the other writings included in the New Testament are likely on examination to prove doubtful or deficient in authority, but because they are—judged by the ordinary tests which we should apply to an ancient book—at once nearly the earliest and quite the most certain, and in all cases it is best to proceed from what is early to what is later, and from what is most certain to what is less so.

We take, then, these four Epistles as our starting point, and we ask what is their bearing on the question which I have propounded for our consideration—"What the first Christians thought about Christ"

Let us first interrogate the Epistles themselves, and ask what answer they give to this question, without discussing in detail the validity of this answer as evidence for the common belief of Christians

For the sake of clearness, I think that we may sum up the main points in five distinct propositions—

- (1) Jesus was a Divine Being—the Messiah of the Jews, and, at the same time, Son of God
- (2) He came forth from God, and became Man, having shared with God an existence prior to his Incarnation
- (3) His career on earth was terminated by a violent death, but, after being crucified, He rose again from the dead
- (4) His Crucifixion, ignominious as it seemed, had nevertheless a far-reaching effect in some mysterious way it operated to remove the guilt of human sin.
- (5) Though He had departed to the sphere from which He came, He would return once more as Judge of quick and dead.

That these doctrines are really to be found in the four Epistles, hardly needs proof, as it would, I suppose, be acknowledged by every one who has read them. As, however, it is desirable to have a distinct impression before the mind, and as it will not take up much space, I will subjoin a few proof-texts under each head.

(1) *Jesus a Divine Being, the Jewish Messiah, and Son of God.* S. Paul repeatedly gives to Jesus the two titles "Christ" or "Messiah" (the great Deliverer Whom the Jews were expecting), and "Son of God." The first of these titles occurs continually—upwards of two hundred times—in the four Epistles; the second occurs fourteen times. As well-defined a passage as any is the opening of the Epistle to the Romans, in which S. Paul describes the "good news" which he was commissioned by God to preach as "concerning His Son, Who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, Who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness [*i.e.* in that supremely holy nature of which He gave proof], by the resurrection of the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. i. 3, 4). In several places the phrase, "Son of God," is accompanied by expressions which imply a close community of nature. This is the force of "His own Son," in Rom. v. 3, 32 (different words in the original, yet both con-

veiling the same emphatic sense) In further development of this sense, He is called in 2 Cor 11 4, the "Image" of God, and in 1 Cor 1 24 the "Power" and "Wisdom" of God The knowledge which Christians have of God is reflected "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 11 6)

(2) *Jesus Incarnate, yet sinless, and existing with God, and putting forth Divine energy, prior to His Incarnation* "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (Gal 11 4) To "send forth" implies a previous state of existence *from* which the Son is sent The character of this existence is more clearly described in 2 Cor viii 9, "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor" The "riches" consisted in sharing the Divine attributes and the Divine glory The Son, so incarnate, was "without sin" He was sent "in the likeness" (but only the likeness, not the reality, so far as it was sinful) "of sinful flesh" (Rom viii 3) And still more explicitly in 2 Cor 11 21, "Him Who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf" While in His previous state of existence the Son had acted as Representative of the Father—He was the Agent in the work of creation (1 Cor viii 6), and His was the protecting Providence which supplied the wants of Israel in the wilderness (1 Cor 11 4, 5)

(3) *Jesus crucified, but raised the third day.* "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2; comp. i. 18, 23; ii. 8; Gal. iii. 1; v. 11; vi. 12, 14, etc.); "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He appeared to Cephas," etc. (1 Cor. xv. 3, etc.); "He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth through the power of God" (2 Cor. xiii. 4).

(4) *The redeeming power of Christ's death.* "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us," *i.e.* by suffering a form of death on which a special curse had been pronounced (Gal. iii. 13; comp. Deut. xxi. 23); "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself [it appears elsewhere that this reconciliation was through His death], not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (2 Cor. v. 19); "Him Who knew no sin He made to be sin [treated as if He were sinful] on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21); but especially the elaborate passage, Rom. iii. 24-26, in which the death of Christ is compared to the ancient Jewish sacrifices on the Day of Atonement: "Justified freely by His grace through the

redemption that is in Christ Jesus Whom God set forth to be a Propitiation, through faith, by His blood etc

(5) *Expected return of the Messiah as Judge* ' In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel [i.e. as I am in the habit of teaching] through [as His Deputy] Jesus Christ (Rom 11 16), "We shall all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor v 10)

There will be no difficulty in obtaining assent to the statement that these propositions are really contained in that group of S Paul's Epistles in which we have been looking for them But it may fairly be asked—What proof have we that they were not peculiar to S Paul himself? How do we know that the same beliefs were held by other Christians?

In any case, no doubt, there is something peculiar in S Paul's mode of conceiving and expressing the doctrines of which we have been speaking It is the business of the theologian to define as well as he can the peculiar element in the Apostle's teaching But, in order to do so, he must institute a comparison with the other Books of the New Testament, and this the restriction which we proposed to ourselves at the outset prevents us from doing We can only exercise

our own judgment in reducing the propositions before us to what appears to be their simplest expression. They will then assume a form similar to that which we have adopted in our headings, though in some respects still simpler, such as the following: (1) Jesus was at once the Jewish Messiah and the Son of God; (2) having first existed with God, He became Man; (3) He was crucified, but rose from the dead; (4) He died for the sins of men; (5) He will come again as their Judge.

Here, again, our course would be easy if we were at liberty to bring in other Books of the New Testament. From the Acts, from the Apocalypse, and from the Epistles which do not profess to have been written by S. Paul, it would be easy to prove that similar doctrines were taught by the other Apostles. But we are debarred by the procedure which we have laid down for ourselves from taking in these other Books. And in trying to obtain the "fixed points" of which I have spoken, it is always well to travel as little as possible outside the data which they themselves furnish. We go back, therefore, once more to our four Epistles, and we look to see if there are any indications that these doctrines were or were not shared by S. Paul with Christians in general.

In regard to doctrines 3 and 4, S. Paul himself

says expressly that they were so shared 'I delivered unto you first of all *that which also I received*, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures," etc (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4). The words translated "received" and "delivered" are the counterparts of each other, and denote a 'tradition,' or something "handed down" from mouth to mouth and from person to person. S. Paul elsewhere (1 Cor. xi. 2) speaks of "delivering," or "handing on," certain "traditions" to his converts. These were evidently parts of the common stock of Christian doctrine with which, in their outline at least, he had perhaps become acquainted while he was himself not a member, but a persecutor, of the Church. They were the elementary truths ("I delivered unto you *first of all*") in which a Christian teacher would be sure to "ground" all who listened to him.

In regard to two of the five points, we have thus direct and satisfactory evidence that the teaching of S. Paul was also that of the whole Church. But can we go no further than this? Can we not say the same of the other three propositions? I believe that we can. But, in investigating this point, it will be necessary to take a brief survey of the historical situation implied in our four Epistles.

At the time when S Paul wrote these Epistles, the Church was passing through the first great crisis of its existence. The Epistles themselves, especially Galatians and 2 Corinthians, and in a less degree 1 Corinthians, show that a vehement controversy was going on, which divided the Church from top to bottom. It was a controversy which, as we look back upon it, we can see must have arisen sooner or later. The question was—What was to become of Gentiles who embraced Christianity? Were they, or were they not, bound to observe the Law of Moses, and more particularly the rite of circumcision?

Christianity grew out of Judaism. It was a new graft on an ancient stock, but in its first beginnings it still adhered to that stock. The first disciples were all Jews, and their head quarters were at Jerusalem. The doctrine that the Messiah had actually come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and a little greater liberality in looking at the spirit rather than the letter of the Law, was all that at first sight seemed to distinguish them from the rest of their countrymen. There was nothing either in their beliefs or practices, which prevented them both from considering themselves, and being considered by others, as perfectly loyal to the faith of their forefathers. A Pharisee or an Essene was a Jew who held certain doctrines and adopted certain

usages in addition to those generally current but they were only thought on this account to be stricter and better, not worse than their fellows. And it was the same with the Christians. They too passed for being Jews of especial piety (Acts 13, 20). Among those who believed were both priests and Pharisees (Acts 21, 7-9) and there is nothing to show that their acceptance of Christianity compelled them to relinquish either their functions or their party.

It was, therefore a new problem which was raised when Gentiles began to flock into the Church in numbers as they did on the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13, 43), nor can we be at all surprised that there should have been a division of opinion upon it. Some held that circumcision was necessary, but Paul and Barnabas resisted this demand, and at last their urgency prevailed with the other Apostles and the main body of the Church (Gal 2, 9-10). We have drifted so far away from Judaism that the opposition is apt to seem to us unreasonable. We forget that it was as much a matter of course for a Jew to be circumcised as it is for a Christian to be baptized, and it was only by his incorporation in the Jewish Church that a Gentile seemed to have any claim on the promises made originally to that Church. The Judaizing opponents of St Paul were

only Conservatives less generous minded, and with a less firm grasp on principle than the Apostle

However, the controversy was one that really went down into the vitals of Christianity. It was a struggle for existence. If the Judaizers had been victors, Christianity must have languished as a Jewish sect, it would never have gone forth to conquer the world.

S. Paul saw this, he saw that the root principles of Christianity required the abandonment of these old national restrictions, and therefore it is that, in the Epistles to Galatians and 2 Corinthians, he urges his cause with such impassioned vehemence. It was well that there was a champion of such strength and force of character to carry it through.

To what is all this tending? it will be asked. Why this long digression? Its object is to show precisely what it was that this first great controversy of primitive Christianity was about. When we have determined what it was, we have also determined in a great measure what it was not. The Church is rent into two great parties—in each case it is true, consisting only of an active and energetic minority, for the mass then, as most commonly, wavered, and the leading Apostles had already given in a perhaps somewhat half hearted adhesion to S. Paul. The two extreme parties stand confronting each other in open war, each

is unsparing in its denunciations of the other. The question of principle also served to kindle personal animosity. Dislike of S. Paul's teaching led his opponents to do what they could to disparage and decry him personally. They would not allow his right to the name of an Apostle, because he had not been one of the actual companions of Jesus ; and wherever they went they sought to undermine his influence.

But the very distinctness with which all these causes of quarrel come out only serves to throw into stronger relief that wider field in which there was *no* cause of quarrel. If we see clearly the issues on which Christians differed, we also see clearly the common ground on which they were agreed. Subtract from the Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians the questions of circumcision and the Law of Moses, and the personal antagonism to S. Paul, and what remains must be doctrines to which it was not possible to take exception. Allowing for the rich development which S. Paul gives to all his leading ideas, and reducing those ideas to their barest form, we may be sure that, if his enemies had seen anything else that they could take hold of, they would have fastened upon it eagerly. They had jealous eyes and suspicious minds enough not to lose any chance of pressing home a charge against their adversary.

But, apart from this indirect testimony, there are other more direct indications that, in the main lines of his teaching, S Paul was at one with the rest of the Church. He says that, when first he began to teach, the Christians of Judæa heard with joy that he had become a preacher of the faith which he had persecuted (Gal 1 23), implying that his faith and theirs was the same. And a little further on, he says expressly that, on his going up to Jerusalem for the Conference, he compared notes with the elder Apostles, 'lest by any means he should be running, or had run, in vain,' but they did not correct him in any point, or tell him anything which he did not already know. And on the particular point of the effect of Christ's death, he argues with the Galatians that, on the theory of his Judaizing opponents, 'Christ died for nought' (Gal 2 21), as if he knew that they, like himself, would assume that Christ had *not* "died for nought, and would therefore be led to see that their doctrine could not be true.

The conclusion at which we arrive is that, apart from the one burning question or group of question by which they were divided, there was a broad platform of common Christianity on which S Paul could stand side by side with even the more extreme of his opponents. In the simple outline of the Christian faith, including all those fun-

mental doctrines of which the rest are but developments or corollaries, they and he were agreed.

This was in the years 57, 58. The narrative portion of the Epistle to the Galatians carries us back to the Conference at Jerusalem some six or seven years earlier. This is hardly more than twenty years from the Ascension. And when we consider that it was about that time that the divergence began, and that, having once begun, it went on widening, we must see that the basis of agreement dates back beyond the first appearance of difference, and so itself must be earlier still. In other words, the outlines of a Christian theology were drawn up, and Christians of all parties were agreed in accepting them, within twenty years of the death of the Founder of Christianity, *i.e.* practically as soon as Christians began to reflect on the life and mission of Christ, and to form for themselves any body of doctrine at all.

These plain historical facts are all to which I wish at present to call attention. They have been reached by a method which I think may be called strictly critical. It has assumed nothing but what the most scrupulous reasoner would be compelled to assume. It is unencumbered by any of the questions as to the history of the Canon, or the criticism of the Gospels, or the improbability of

miracles, which are apt to entangle our progress elsewhere. The only postulate which our argument makes is that the four Epistles were really written by S. Paul, which no reasonable person doubts, and that they may rightly be used as describing the state of the Christian Church and of Christian belief at the time when they were written.

I am well aware that there are some to whom it will make no difference when or by whom the beliefs of which I have been speaking were held. They regard them as unreasonable in themselves, and as such they reject them and trouble their minds about them no further. But can they really be got rid of so easily? It seems to me that such a process is like cutting the Gordian knot, instead of untying it. It matters not what our point of view may be. There are certain facts to be explained, and there are practically two hypotheses, and only two, to explain them. One is the Christian hypothesis—that Christ was what Christians suppose Him to be. The other is the non-Christian hypothesis—that He was a mere human Teacher like ourselves. Which of these best explains the phenomena which we have been considering?

If Christians are right, then all falls easily and naturally into its place. The progress of the history is just what we should have expected it to

be. Controversies arise which it was inevitable should arise—as inevitable as that bird which it has incited a certain rage will begin to fly. And on the other hand the unanimity of Christians is equally accounted for. But on the other hypothesis is not this unanimity a serious stumbling block? Is it not most extraordinary that at this extremely early date the whole Christian community should seem to be agreed on points themselves so provocative of question? Surely if Christ had been a mere human Teacher the controversies of primitive Christianity must have taken a wholly different turn. Surely we should have had in the Church a natural party and a supernatural party and the first question to be discussed would be—Was Christ God or was He man? Is it not passing strange that we do not find in these Epistles certainly genuine and certainly early the least hint or trace the faintest shadow of doubt in any section of the Church as to this the most fundamental point of all?

My object however is not so much to dilate on the difficulties to which the non-Christian hypothesis is exposed as to determine some of the facts which any hypothesis must account for. I wish to have it clearly understood that the Christian has no reason to shun the application of the strictest historical methods. I wish to mark out the

ground which, in applying those methods, I think that he ought to occupy. I think that he should start in all cases from these four Epistles of S. Paul. And I wish it to be distinctly realized, what exceptional and invaluable evidence these four Epistles give us, judged on no assumptions but by the most rigorous processes of criticism, as to the foundation-doctrines of our religion.

Why do we call the Bible inspired?

THE knowledge of the Bible has long been the special pride of Englishmen. Again and again its influence has affected a crisis of our national history, as well as moulded the patient, fearless, duty-loving character of many an individual Englishman. We inherit it as a precious heirloom; but when we come to use it in the present day, so many difficulties are thrown in the way, partly by real changes in historical and scientific knowledge, partly by a misunderstanding of its teaching, that many are perplexed and diverted from the study. The object of this paper is, therefore, to consider some of the preliminary questions which meet us at the outset of such study; and to show cause why we make a special claim for the Inspiration of this Book and for its patient study.

Why, then, do we call the Bible inspired?

I. In answering this question, we must first ask—What do we mean by “the Bible”? It is objected at

times that there are different Bibles—that what you find in one is not found in another, and our argument from any particular text is put aside in this way. Do we, then, mean the Authorized English Bible used in our churches? or the New Revised Bible published last year? or the translation which Roman Catholics use? Properly speaking, we do not mean either of these, but the original Books from which these were translated. The Books of the Old Testament were written by the Jews while they spoke Hebrew; and the Books of the New Testament were written by Jews after they had learned to speak Greek, the language which they naturally used for writing to foreigners. So, then, we mean the Hebrew original of the Old Testament and the Greek original of the New Testament. Even of these we cannot be quite sure that we have every word. The Books were written long ago; they have been preserved in a number of copies written by hand, and so differences are found in these copies. But the differences are slight, and, for our particular purpose in this paper, unimportant. It has been said by great scholars lately that “the words in the New Testament still subject to doubt hardly amount to more than a thousandth part of the whole.”¹ We have, indeed, far stronger manu-

¹ Westcott and Hort, “New Testament,” vol. i. App., p. 561.

script authority for the New Testament than for any writing of classical times; so that if we had only the manuscripts, we should be more sure that we had the actual words of the Apostles than those of Thucydides or Tacitus or Josephus. But in this case we have much more than the manuscripts. Before and since the Books were written, the Church has been teaching the truths contained in them; and it is as unlikely that any serious changes could have been introduced into the Bible while the Church was carefully guarding the truth, as that any serious change should have been introduced into Magna Charta without the knowledge of Parliament. And, as a matter of fact, you may strike out all the texts in the Bible on which there is any difference in the manuscripts, and you will not have touched any of the central truths which the Bible teaches. In the same way with regard to the translations, there are differences in them; but for the main purposes of the study of the Bible these are unimportant. For a thorough study of the Bible, of course, we must know the exact words and the exact meaning of each word; but these points ought not to stop us on the threshold, and they are not necessary for the purpose of defending the Bible against its opponents; for the strength of the Bible teaching is that it does not rest on isolated texts, but on broad streams of truth, which

run through the whole Book, broadening and deepening as they go.

II. We pass to the more difficult question—What do we mean by “Inspiration”?

Now, here again, to speak quite strictly, we cannot properly speak of a book as inspired. Inspiration means “a breathing into;” but this implies *persons*. It means that the Spirit of God has breathed into the hearts or minds or wills of certain men, and thereby given them a power which they would not otherwise have had. An inspired Bible is, then, the record of inspired men. But in the case of the Bible there is a further fact. These men do not stand by themselves. They are all members of one and the same nation; they interpret its history, they represent its faith, and are acknowledged as its true representatives. We have, then, in the case of the Old Testament, what we may call an inspired nation; a nation inspired in a way in which no other nation ever was inspired—inspired with a faith in a God of righteousness, and with a hope in the ultimate triumph of good over evil. This is a fact, quite independently of all explanations of it. How is it to be accounted for? The Christian explanation is that there had been a special Revelation of God to them. All Inspiration implies a Revelation of some kind. We sometimes speak of a painter as inspired: that is

because there has been a revelation to him; the veil which hides the beauty of the world from ordinary men has been drawn back for him, and he has been enabled to see it. Again, we call a poet inspired: that is because the truths which underlie human life have been revealed to him. So the Jewish nation was inspired with this undying hope and faith because God had revealed Himself to them as a gracious redeeming God, Who had formed them into a nation, Who had saved them out of Egypt, Who had given them a clear Law, Who had protected them in all their history, Who had provided means for the forgiveness of their sins. But, just as the whole nation was thus chosen out by God for this special revelation, so, out of the nation itself, certain individuals were chosen to be the interpreters of His Will to the nation. These were the Prophets. To them the Inspiration came in full measure which was given in less degree to all the people. Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, and the other Prophets, were all inspired with special insight to interpret the facts of this wonderful history; they had insight into its principles; they showed the laws of righteousness working in it; they showed the relation of the Jews to the other nations of the world; and the Old Testament is the record of their interpretation. It contains the writings of the choicest spirits

among a nation which itself stands out above all other nations in its knowledge of right and wrong, and of the relations between man and God.

We pass to the New Testament. Again we find another Revelation. The life of Jesus Christ had been lived. That life was, by His own teaching, a Revelation of God. The veil which hid the true nature of God from men's eyes was drawn back; He was seen as a Father, in a deeper and wider sense than was known before; He was seen as Love—entering into human life, restoring, purifying all its conditions; hating sin and conquering it; making human life free from sin and stronger than death. And this Revelation resulted in a new Inspiration. The Apostles, and all who put trust in this Revelation, were inspired with greater hopes and greater faith in what was in store for the world. The Spirit of God fell upon them, and formed them into one united Body; instead of the Jewish nation, the Catholic Church, without any limits of race or class, is the inspired Body which thus became the great "school of virtue" in the world, which lives the life of righteousness, embodying through the power of the Sacraments the life which had been in Christ Jesus, carrying its message to all the world. As with the Old Testament, so with the New Testament, this inspired Body existed before there were any written records; but the circum-

stances of the various Churches soon made it necessary for the Apostles to write for their guidance ; and the spread of Christianity made it necessary to have some permanent record of the life of Christ, and of the early days and principles of the Church. As before on the Prophets, so now on Evangelists and writers of the Epistles, there fell the Spirit's power, guiding them to select those facts which were of permanent value ; and in time the instinct of the Church chose out those writings which were thus valuable—it formed the Canon of the New Testament, and the Councils of the Church gave to this their formal sanction, recognizing these Books as giving an adequate trustworthy account of all the central truths which underlay its existence, and putting these Books forward as a standard of truth for after ages.

Such is the way in which the Inspired Collection of Books grew up, and consequently, if we are asked how we know that these Books are inspired and others are not, we should answer—

(1) We know that the Old Testament is inspired, because the Jews, who knew more about God and righteousness than any other nation, tell us that it was a true record of the truths which God had revealed to their nation. Further, Jesus Christ Himself, treated it as inspired, and the Christian Church embodied it in its sacred writings.

(2) We know that the New Testament is inspired, because the Church which had been chosen as the representative of Christ, and filled with His Spirit, and which always professed to have received its teaching from Him and His Apostles, and to reject all innovations, recognized these Books as inspired and as containing a true account of His life and teaching. Just as in a picture-gallery, if we are perplexed and want to learn what is first-rate painting and what is not, we go to the true art critics for guidance; or as a good literary critic guides us to the great works of literature, so the spiritual Church guides us to the great spiritual utterances.

(3) When we have accepted this guidance, we can of ourselves find in the Books traces of Inspiration, as, for instance, the wonderful unity which binds together the teaching of men of different ages in such a striking harmony: and this seems to point us to the work of a Spirit which is greater than any one of them and able to use them all for its purposes.

(4) We are able now to do what was not possible in former ages—to appeal to a comparison with other sacred books, and to the effect which the Bible has had in history. Christian students have boldly translated all the sacred books of other religions, without any fear that the Bible can suffer from comparison with them. We can fearlessly

challenge any opponent to show an collection of books which shows so high a conception of the nature of God and man. And on the other hand the Bible has itself been translated into almost every language of the world and it has been found by experience that its truths are so universal so permanent, that men of all races and stages of civilization have found comfort, winning guidance, hope, truth, inspiration in its pages.

But does it follow from this that we do not recognize any Inspiration outside the Bible? I put aside as worthless all the truth that here is in other sacred books or in later Christian writings? Certainly not. For Revelation which lies at the basis of Inspiration was not confined to the Jews. Long before there was a separate Jewish nation, God had revealed Himself to men. He had revealed Himself by conscience by the sense of right and wrong, He had revealed Himself by reason which strove to know Him and recognized Him through the works of creation. The Bible itself clearly asserts this truth¹. The object of the special Revelation to the Jewish nation was not so much to teach new truths as to emphasize old truths and to provide means by which they should be put into practice. Just as a clever boy in a family gets a better education than his

¹ Cf especially Gen 1-11 Acts 17:17 Rom 1:18

brothers, because he is more capable of receiving it, and by his better education stimulates his brothers, and shows, more clearly than can be seen in their case, the meaning and advantages of education, or just as the poet feels strongly and expresses forcibly the principles which are felt, though less strongly and with less power of expression, by all men, so the Jewish race was chosen to show, more clearly than was done in other races, the possibilities and the blessings of righteousness and of the knowledge of God. The Bible itself is ever asserting this truth—that the blessings promised to the Jews are to be blessings for all nations. Other nations, like the Greeks, may have had a deeper revelation of beauty or of the methods of human knowledge, and their artists and philosophers were inspired to express it. Or, again, you may find in the Indian religious poems or in the Greek dramatists deep moral and spiritual truths, on a level with much in the Bible, and all such we value and treasure. But, when this has been admitted, it remains true that there is in the Bible a continuity of religious teaching extending over thousands of years, and growing stronger until it culminates in a great climax, to which there is nothing to correspond in heathen religion—in them the general rule is that the earlier religious ideas are the purer and the truer, and that they degenerate with the course of time.

It remains true that the Jewish writers have a strong, conscious, certain hold upon this truth, which is quite different from the stray, fitful insight of heathen writers. It remains true that the Inspiration of the Bible deals with that side of human life which ranks highest—the side of conscience, of righteousness, of relation to God. And it remains true, finally, that the Bible contains the foundations of the Church's life, to which later writers cannot add, though they may build upon them. And so, for all these reasons, we claim for the Bible an Inspiration so different in degree from the inspiration of the most religious heathen, or of later Christian writers, as virtually to be a difference in kind.

For these reasons we claim for the Bible that it is inspired in a way in which no other book or collection of books ever has been. It follows from this that we must look for the effect of such Inspiration upon them on the side of religious truth. As the Jewish nation was chosen specially as the race in which righteousness was to be trained, and human hopes of Redemption were to be fostered, so the influence of the Spirit of God gave to its writers the power of seeing rightly, and recording truly for after ages, all that bore upon moral and religious truth. Not that this was confined to what we should call specially religious doctrine. Rather it is the great merit of the Bible that the Spirit of

God is seen to be at work in all spheres of life. The creation of the world, the early prehistoric legendary days, the details of ritual, the facts of history, are dealt with as much as prophetic teaching or religious psalms. But they are dealt with, not for their own sake, not for mere scientific interest, but in their bearing upon the relations of man to God and God to man. Inspiration, then, secures for the Bible that it gives us an infallible account of the character of God, of the conditions of human life, and of the way in which God deals with man for the purpose of raising his nature to its true ideal. By calling the Bible inspired, we claim for it that it is the certain and infallible guide in all principles of religion and morals.

But is there no difference even in this respect? Is a Revelation in the earlier part as good as one in the later? In one sense it is, in another sense it is not. Each bit is indeed, a true Revelation of God, but it is a Revelation which was adapted to the capacities of men at each different stage in their history—a Revelation which was gradually building up a higher conception of God, and forming a complete character in man, and which was professedly incomplete until the coming of Jesus. We cannot afford to lose any element either of the conception of God or of human character. We may have got beyond the standpoint of the Jews,

but many in England have not, and many uncivilized nations have not, and for them parts of the Old Testament may be the one thing needed; and the Bible would lose its value as a universal guide if deprived of the Old Testament. Even those who have gained a higher conception of God as a God of love will be the first to acknowledge that they need the constant reminder that this love contains within it the lower conception of strict and holy justice.

But, on the other hand, we must also claim that the Revelation is only seen at its completest in the life of Jesus Christ. The Revelation is progressive, and "the test of a progressive Revelation is the end." The teaching of the New Testament is the final statement of the principles of religion and morals. By it Christianity is to be judged; not by any practice or teaching in the Old Testament, which may only have been permitted "for the hardness of men's hearts."

But, then, if this is so, it may be objected that the Bible becomes of less use as a guide; that we may be misled by parts which were only meant to be temporary. This is certainly possible; but we are not left without guidance in this difficulty. There are at least three things which guide us to know what is of permanent and absolute value.

(1) There is the test of which I have just spoken :

the test supplied by the end of the Revelation—the teaching of Jesus Christ. Do these earlier parts lead onward to that? do they agree with it? Then they are still absolutely true and binding. To take the instance which is taken by Jesus Christ Himself. The original ideal of marriage, as contained in the Book of Genesis, is against the idea of divorce. The Mosaic legislation for the time sanctioned divorce. But Jesus Christ accepted the first ideal, and rejected the Mosaic accommodation to the state of the Jews; and so the first remains permanently binding.¹

(2) There is the test which the Church supplies for this very purpose, that is, the Creed. One of the purposes for which the Creed was originally drawn up was to serve as a manual to the Bible. Because many were too ignorant or too busy to study the whole Bible, the Creed was drawn up as a short statement of the great central truths which were in the Bible, and which it was important for all to know. If, then, you find anything that seems contrary to these great truths,—the Fatherhood of God, the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit working through the Catholic Church,—you may be sure that that is not of permanent value, or that you have misunderstood its meaning.

¹ Cf. St. Mark x. 2-12.

(3) Lastly, as the Bible was collected by the Church, so the Church was intended to be its abiding interpreter, and, in cases of doubt, appeal can always be made for guidance to its best representatives

The main effect of Inspiration was, therefore, to illuminate the minds of those who were inspired with insight into religious truth. But one further question remains—Did it thereby imply an accurate knowledge of all details, so that the statements of the Bible are above all criticism, whether literary, or historical, or scientific? On each of these points a few words must be said.

Now, literary criticism clearly stands on a different position from the other two. It is only concerned with finding out the circumstances under which the record was written. It tries to find out what author wrote each Book, when he wrote it, why he wrote it, and what materials he used in writing it. Literary criticism is, therefore, quite free to deal with the Bible, indeed, it is the greatest help to a true recognition of its meaning. While it examines the processes by which the truth was arrived at and recorded, the effect of Inspiration is seen in the result, in the truth when it has been so recorded. As Bishop Butler said of natural events, "that when things come to pass according to the course

of Nature, this does not hinder them from being His doing Who is the God of Nature," so the truths of the Bible are not less inspired because we can trace out the exact human circumstances which were used by the Spirit of God, nor are they less inspired because declared rather earlier or later than traditional theories had fancied

Historical and scientific criticism, however, stand on a different level from literary criticism. They deal with the same facts that the Bible deals with, and their conclusions may clash with its statements. What are we to say in this case?

To take the case of history first. There are in all historical study two factors to be considered—the actual events which happened and the interpretation which is to be placed on these events. Now, of these the most important is the interpretation—the power of seeing the true causes which have produced the events, and for this we claim that Inspiration has given a certain and infallible insight. The Bible was, indeed, the first Book which taught the real value of history, by showing that God's Will was being worked out in it, the amount of space devoted to historical details is in itself a consecration of history. It was the first Book that made a universal history possible, by showing that not only the Jews, but that all the nations of the world, were under the control of one God,

and that His Will was being worked out in their history.

If the early accounts of prehistoric times in the Book of Genesis are compared with the early legends of other Semitic races, it will be found that Inspiration has had the effect of purifying them from all that is impure, fanciful and capricious and the effect making them worthy of God. And in the later historical times, it has had the effect of showing at each stage, and throughout the whole how "righteousness exalteth a nation" and how God's Will has been worked out. Other sources of historical knowledge may supply us with a complete knowledge of secondary causes for any event, but the Bible traces all up to the primary cause, and we claim that in this it is absolutely true and that this is, in the end, the only adequate interpretation. Then, as to details, writers so guided by the Spirit of God, a God whom they ever regarded as a God who could not lie, must have been kept from any deliberate falsification of facts, nor are they likely to have made mistakes of negligence, but they were, of course, members of a small nation little able to gauge the exact proportion of their nation with that of the great nations of the world and so may have made mistakes in matters which lay beyond their knowledge. We should not be surprised, then, if we were to find that Assyrian or

Egyptian inscriptions were inconsistent with Biblical statements. This would not startle us, and yet, as a matter of fact, a quite recent writer says, "Wherever the Biblical history comes into contact with that of its powerful neighbours, and this can be tested by contemporaneous monuments of Egypt and Assyro-Babylonia, it is confirmed even in the smallest detail."¹ Further; it must be remembered that many apparent inconsistencies are due to our ignorance of the facts of the time. Every writer of history is obliged to omit some facts, and to choose only those which are needed for his purpose; and so such points as the two genealogies in St. Matthew and St. Luke, the date of the taxing under Cyrenius, or the exact length of our Lord's ministry, are all points where fuller knowledge might clear up our difficulties; or, again, such points as the exact circumstances of St. Peter's denial, or the exact words of the title on the Cross, are points which are unimportant, they do not touch the central facts, and would not be regarded in any other history as affecting the writer's credibility.

With regard to science, something of the same kind is true. Here, again, there are two factors—the actual facts of natural science, and the interpre-

¹ Professor Sayce, in "The Witness of Ancient Monuments to the Old Testament Scriptures" (Religious Tract Society).

tation of them in relation to the religious life. Inspiration gives the latter. It consecrates science, and indeed gives the interpretation which alone makes science possible. It says, creation was a manifestation of God; therefore God can be known through it. Creation is all the work of one God, working upon regular and fixed laws. "He hath given them a law which shall not be broken;"¹ therefore science becomes possible, which it could not be when men believed in polytheism. Further, creation is all *under* God, subservient to His Will; therefore no part of it can be worshipped—not the host of heaven, as in Persia, not the animals, as in Egypt. All are creatures, meant for man's use and help. That is the interpretation which Inspiration gives of science; and it deals very little with details; where it does, as in the order of creation in Gen. i., we have no reason to insist upon them as against any clear statement of modern science. That is, in its turn, one of the ways in which God reveals Himself, and we are willing to trust it within its true limits.

To sum up, then. The Bible is inspired because it is the record of the chief Revelation of God to man. God revealed Himself in creation, in conscience, and in reason; so that those who have never known the Bible have had a Revelation of Him.

¹ Psa. cxlviii. 6.

But He revealed Himself more fully as a God of grace to the Jewish nation in the facts of their history, and the teaching of their Prophets, and most fully of all to the Christian Church in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. The Bible is, in a sense, the record of all these Revelations, it explains the origin of creation, of conscience, of reason, but it is mainly the record of the fullest Revelation, and is an inspired, infallible guide as to the ways in which God deals with man for his redemption.

Those who know the Bible well may feel that there has not been enough claim made for it in these pages. But they should remember (1) that the existence of other Revelations and other Inspirations is not insisted on here to diminish, but to enhance, the strength of this. Some people seem to argue that because there are traces of truth and inspiration in heathen writers, therefore there is no need of the Bible. This is like arguing that because the moon gives us a pleasant and useful light, therefore we have no need of the sun. The real inference is that there are traces of truth there, and we value them there, but that only leads us to value more the fuller, completer truth which sanctions and strengthens them. If God's Spirit spake in sundry times and divers manners to them, it spake in complete utterance through His Son,

with a language that commands absolute submission and wins entire confidence on our part

(2) Lastly, these pages are intended for those who are beginning to study the Bible. One who has studied it long, who knows the meaning of the Revelation in Christ, finds traces of His Presence everywhere, the Old Testament is seen to be leading up to Him in parts where it was least expected, the very words come with a force and an inspiration which are a comfort in sorrow and a strength in action. For, in this sense, we may speak of the Book as itself inspired. Its words have come from men full of the Spirit of God, and as the letter of a friend, kept and cherished for many years, can give us the comfort, the inspiration, which his presence would have done, so in reading the Bible we find ourselves in contact with the very Spirit of God Himself, and rise from it ourselves inspired for fresh effort in the cause of righteousness and for the service of God.

NOTE—The following books are well worth study in connection with this subject—Dean Church, “The Discipline of the Christian Character” and ‘The Sacred Poetry of Early Religions’ (Macmillan and Co), Prof A B Bruce, “The Chief End of Revelation” (Hodder and Stoughton) Rev H Harris, “Historical Religion and Biblical Revelation” (H Frowde) Rev F Myers, “Catholic Thoughts on the Bible and Theology” (Isbister and Co)

Salvation.

To my mind there are few sights so moving as that of a great crowd. The man who sits next to me in a railway carriage is a more familiar sight than a great mountain or a vast factory ; but I am quite sure that if I could know his inner history, it would interest me more, and probably do more for me than the greatest works of nature or of science. And therefore the sight of a great number of men and women, so different and yet so alike, sets me thinking, What is the inner history of all these? what do their lives contain?

It is a sad question. Who could trace out all the lines of purpose, memory, hope, which are only faintly marked upon the faces that meet me in a London street? Whose hope is brave enough to nerve him for action in view of the failure, the helplessness, the corruption, which make up so much of the story of those whom I pass as I walk along?

The thought is a weight I cannot bear, a tangle I cannot unravel in any way, save one.

The faith of a Christian is the only relief, the only clue. They who believe in Christ know that to His Eye there is order through all the confusion, hope and purpose through all the dark misery. To Him, our Lord, the differences and contrasts which strike us so forcibly in the lot and outward bearing of mankind, though they are not without their meaning and importance, are yet quite secondary. One great primary contrast dwarfs them all, one simple dividing line runs through the masses of humanity, if Jesus Christ were to show Himself in London with all His glory to day, the multitude would fall apart to His right Hand and His left, and we should see, in clear and unmistakable separation, the companies of the saved and the lost. And these revealed divisions would correspond with none that are visible to us now. The saved would not be the wealthy, or the learned, or the fair, or the strong, or the healthy, or the respectable, nay they would not coincide with the number of those who are baptized, or who communicate, or who profess and call themselves Christians, and the lost would not be simply the men who do not go to a place of worship, nor those who are not enrolled in the family of Christ's Church, still less would they be the wretched, or the ignorant, or the weak, least of all would they be the poor. The dividing line goes in and out amongst these classes,

parting those who are in the way of salvation from those who are not,—those who, if to-day their life-trial were to end, would be for ever in the light and peace of God, from those who, if they were judged to-day, would be found to have parted themselves for ever from Him.

If we believe in such a division, real, though hidden now, to be shown for certain hereafter, it is no cant to speak of it to one another; and though the teaching of the Church and the Bible about Salvation is well known to many of our countrymen, it is worth while, by reason of its matchless importance, to include a simple statement of it in our series of Tracts.

Salvation, then, is *a right relation to Jesus Christ*. That relation is different for different men at different times, though in the end it will be the same for all; but at all times, in all stages of its development, it must be a real and a right relation, as all plants must be in a real and right relation to the sun—in the seed, the shoot, and the flower, as well as when the fruit is ripening.

The seed underground must have the sun's heat, though it does not yet enjoy his light; when once it has risen above ground, and the light shines upon it, light becomes a necessity for its continued life and growth. So those men who have been called into the light of the Gospel can only bear

the flowers and fruit of faith, hope, and love by means of that light, in Scripture language, God says to His Church, "Arise, shine, for thy Light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" ¹ For those who can have it, the light, or knowledge of Jesus Christ alone secures a right relation to Him

But it does not follow that those who have not yet come within reach of His light are not in a right relation to Him His warmth can reach them in their darkness, and give them life, even before they know His name, and thus lead them on to come under the influence of His revelation

This is clearly taught in the Bible, though Christians often forget it S. John tells us that our Lord Jesus is the Eternal Word of the Father, and that the life of the Word was, before He became man, the light of men He speaks of the Incarnation as subsequent to this, and implies that they who have made a right use of the preparatory light, will be able to receive the Word made Flesh ²

It would therefore be a gross misrepresentation of the Christian faith, to teach that those who, not through their own fault, are living without any profession of faith in Christ, and who do not yet receive the Sacraments of His Church, cannot be in a right relation to Him If they are true to the voice of

¹ Isaiah lx. i

² S. John i. 4-14

their Maker within them, they will do their best to be unselfish and good to others, they will be less and less satisfied with what they are, and will long more and more for that peace and relief from a condemning conscience which only comes through God made man.

Even though such persons pass away from this life without coming to believe in Christ, I confidently trust that they will be amongst those to whom He will say, when He comes to judge the world, "Inasmuch as ye have done" your work of mercy "unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."¹

I have referred to the case of those who, not through their own fault, are not outwardly Christian, because I think that the rash words of some of our friends as to the condition of such persons have a tendency to drive back inquirers and shake the faith of believers. I feel great sympathy for a man who says, "My father worked hard and did his best for me, and I will not believe that his Maker has rejected him, because he never had a fair chance of being a Churchman or a Christian." Surely it would be shortsighted presumption to condemn such a man, and I know of no doctrine of the Church which requires that I should condemn him.

Of course this is a wholly different thing from

¹ S. Matt. xxv. 32, 37, 40.

saying that it does not matter what religion a man professes, so long as he acts up to it, or that a false religion can save a man as well as a true one. If a man who belongs to a false religion is saved, it will be in spite of its being false, and because the falsehood has not poisoned his inmost heart. It will be because he has done his best to be true to God's secret dealings with him, and to the knowledge which he possesses, and because by these things he has been made to feel his sinfulness and prepared to welcome our Lord as his Saviour when He is revealed to him, whether in this life, or after death.¹

But it is almost certain that the persons into whose hands this tract may pass will not be among those who cannot know Christ. Most people in London who have any intercourse with Christian teachers, are fully able to understand, and, by God's help, to acknowledge, the claims of our Lord. I say, the claims of our Lord, rather than the claims of the Church, because that is the right way to put my message to you. I am a priest of the Church of England, and I wish to offer you, in God's name, the salvation which I trust He is giving me, by the power of the Holy Ghost, through her Sacraments ; but the Church and the Sacraments are only means whereby our Lord blesses us, and they are nothing

¹ Rom. i. 19-21 ; ii. 14-16.

except to those who receive them for His sake. It is possible for a man to be saved through Christ without knowing what He intends the Church and the Sacraments to be to us; but it is not possible for any man to get salvation from Church and Sacraments without faith in Christ. I will add, however, that if God sees that a man ought to know that the Church and Sacraments are Christ's will for him, he cannot have a living faith in Christ, and yet reject them.

I venture to hope that this thought may help us in view of one great difficulty which meets a man who is thinking about salvation in London to-day. He may well be perplexed at the differences between those who claim to be Christ's. I cannot ask him to accept the Church of England, merely because her faith is the established religion, though a man who believes that God's guiding hand is over his life and circumstances, may well take that as a reason for considering her claim. If you to whom this Tract comes have been accustomed to look on the Church as a foe, I would say,—First see how you stand as to faith in Christ, and then consider what is His will for you as to His Church. In spite of our divisions, we know that all who hoped to be saved through Jesus Christ would join in telling us to come nearer to Him; and this greatly tends to clear the way for me to

deliver my message to you to-day ; but, whoever you are, I hope the time will come when you will know Jesus in His Church. My message is, that the Word is made Flesh ; that He, the Son of God, has been lifted up on the Cross that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. My duty is to press on your consideration that you should ask yourself in what relation you stand to this message. Perhaps you have never believed it ; perhaps you confess it, but have not found its power on your own life ; perhaps, with me, you firmly trust that it has done much for you, but are persuaded that much more is in store for you in this greatest act of Divine Love. For all of us the prayer may be said—

“ Let him love Thee to-day who ne’er loved Thee before,
And he who hath loved Thee, to-day love Thee more.”

For all of us it may be useful to recall the grounds on which our faith in Jesus Christ is claimed. I need hardly say that these are many. To set forth some of them would need learning and power which do not belong to me. Let no one who finds the message of these lines inadequate to his needs, think that he has heard all that can be said on behalf of Jesus Christ. But there is one line of thought which appeals very strongly to some of us, and ought not, I think, to be without power for any. Let me try to set it before you.

Is it not true that all our fellow-creatures with whom we can hold communication are deeply convinced of two things: first, that there is a Right and a Wrong; and, secondly, that they cannot attain to the Right? In all mankind there is this sense of incompleteness, and when men allow themselves to reflect on the power and goodness of their Maker, there must be a strong expectation that He will provide a way to enable man to attain to that standard of right which his conscience sets before him. Certainly any religion which professes to solve this universal difficulty has a claim upon man's attention. The greatest modern student of the history of religions,¹ Professor Max Müller, has told us that there are only three which can compete for the future of the world, because no others profess to have a message for all mankind. These three are Buddhism, Christianity, and Moham-medanism. Each of these has its own way of solving the difficulty. The religion of Mahomet, which (with whatever excuse in the sins of Christians) has been hostile from its first origin to the faith of Christ, solves the difficulty by sanctioning sensuality and persecution, and thus lowering the standard which man's conscience would set before him. The founder of Buddhism, living in Central Asia, before the Incarnation, and being in no

¹ "Chips from a German Workshop," iv. 263.

opposition to the stream of Divine revelation sought to solve the difficulty in a nobler way by imagining that man would escape finally from sin by losing his individual existence. In contrast to these two rival systems of religion the teaching of Jesus Christ maintains and raises the standard of conscience, and at the same time preserves man's hope of personal immortality, and this is done by an appeal to an instinct no less universal and deep in mankind than the consciousness of sin.

Any man worthy of the name knows that pure love is the most ennobling power in his life. An innocent child, a good wife, a faithful friend—who does not know the lifting power of such blessings? Our Lord tells us that this power of love is the means by which He will save us. He proposes Himself to us as an absolutely perfect object of love. For He claims by the witness of His followers by His recorded words by the necessity of His character, to be the God Who made us, as well as the Brother of us all. He was born of the Virgin Mary, and died on the Cross that our sins might be forgiven and abolished. Let us see how this was done. It was by no unfair or arbitrary decree, no change in the unchanging God. He who did no sin,¹ S. Paul teaches, was made sin for us, bore our sins, as S. Peter says, in

¹ 2 Cor. v. 21

His own Body on the tree ¹ put away sin in the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews by the sacrifice of Himself² If I ask what this means I call to mind that love of others is by common consent a mark of virtue in man No man has fallen so low as he who does not love his child He who loves his child becomes a better man if he loves his neighbours or his class More noble still is it to love one's country Most noble was the old Roman saying I am a man all that bears the name of man is kin to me What would it be to find a human heart with the wide extent of that 'caring and all the intensity of a mother's feeling for her suffering child' As she bends over it we see that its pain becomes her pain love unites it to her hardly less than did the mystery of its birth Imagine that love raised to its very highest in a perfect man add to it the all knowledge that belongs to God see it extended to the whole of mankind and you may know something of the love and the suffering by which Jesus saved us Recall another high instinct of man's nature See that the noblest would wish rather to suffer the just penalty of wrong doing than to go meanly free without setting a mark on the hatefulness of evil This was the motive or rather this is a shadow of the motive that caused our Lord to suffer in His

whole earthly life, and especially when He died on the Cross. To be right with Him is to be right with God, and to be right with God, the All holy, is to know that our sin is forgiven. In order to be right with our Lord, He asks that we will not refuse His Love. If we receive His Love, we must desire to return it, and the beginning of our Love for Him is Faith. So faith in Him is our Salvation. By faith we take Him as being that which He claims to be—God and Man in two natures, one Divine Person, and by the same faith, we desire to give Him what is due to our Maker and our Brother—entire submission, perfect trust. This submission includes doing His will, where we know it. We dare not hope to be saved by faith in Him, if we find that our faith does not give us a sincere wish to obey and imitate Him. As soon as we seek to obey Jesus Christ, we find that the ordinances of His Church are designed to join us to Him more and more closely. He has summed up the Ten Commandments in two great duties, the love of God, and the love of our neighbour. All Christian virtues are included in these two, all vices are forbidden by them. The Bible, read and preached, will help us to understand this. If a man who seeks Christ, comes to church regularly, I think he will soon find that his views of right conduct are so enlarged as to fill him with joy at the prospect

before him, and shame at the life behind him. Gradually the joy will overcome the shame, and then the man will know something of the power and blessing of the salvation of Christ. He will begin to find that the love of God frees him not only from future penalty, but from present evil. The meaning of Christian Baptism, as it is set forth in St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Colossians, will become real to him. Union with Christ will be seen to be not a future gift in the world to come, but a fact of the present life. 'Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.'¹ 'Ye are not your own, but ye are bought with a price.'² 'How can we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?'³ Such words as these will teach him the meaning of Baptism, which Christ has appointed as the means whereby we are personally made to share in that brotherhood or membership with Him, which He intends for all mankind. Where, therefore, Baptism can be had, it is necessary. To refuse Baptism would be to refuse His will, and to break with Him. Those who have been baptized as infants must claim their membership in Christ by faith, hope, and love, when they are old enough to do so. If they do not thus claim the blessing, they will be refusing to return His Love, and thus lose the benefits of the state of

¹ Col iii 3² 1 Cor vi 19, 20³ Rom vi 2

salvation into which they came at Baptism. It is not to be supposed that this living faith can be had merely because we wish for it: it must be God's gift which His Holy Spirit will bestow on those who truly and sincerely ask for it. From the first beginning of any good in us we have been receiving the help of the Holy Spirit and as we have more faith and love for Christ and more hatred of sin we are more under the influence of this inward Guide. So it is that Prayer and Sacraments self-control and Christian effort lead us to see that it is on a gift of God the help of an unseen Person that we must rely. It is He Who gives us the Faith to claim or seal the baptismal gift: so when properly instructed it is He the Holy Spirit Who will complete the baptismal gift in the Laying on of Hands and then will prepare us for the Holy Communion wherein our Lord wills that we should be joined afresh to Him and He to us.

Every baptized person who has not lost the help of our Lord by refusing to claim it or by committing wilful sin is in a state of salvation and would be saved if he were to die. The remedy for wilful sin after baptism is repentance and the reality of repentance is tested and accepted by the authority which Christ has left in His Church. After death there is no more possibility of fresh sin for those who pass out of life in a state of

salvation, and when our Lord comes to judge the world, salvation will be made perfect.

Salvation, then, was won for all men by our Lord on the Cross.

It is given to the faithful, or to infants—in the hope that they will be faithful, and so that they will lose it if they are not faithful—in Baptism, where Baptism can be had.

It is secured to those who die in a right relation to Christ.

It will be completed at the Last Day. So when I look at the crowds in the street, and think of the great division that is possible between them, I know that those are on the right side in the division who are either (1) honestly seeking for what Christ, Whom they know not as yet, can alone give them, or (2) resting in dependent and obedient faith and love upon Christ their Brother and Saviour. If they so rest, they will obey His will so far as they know it; they will be baptized, confirmed, communicants, when they have the opportunity. Let each one of us ask himself—on which side am I?

O THOU, Who madest me, have mercy on me,
and show me the way to Thy Love

O Thou, Who art called the Way, let no bad
power hold me back from Thee.

O Thou, Whom my heart longeth after, leave

me not without the help which Thou alone canst give.

Yield thyself, my soul, to goodness ; yield thyself to God. Seek, friendless man, the best of friends ; seek Jesus. Ask Him for the gift of God. Learn to say, as thou repentest of thy sins, "I am Thine, O save me. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

THE following pages represent, as will be seen from the references, a desire to bring within brief compass and general access the help which the writer found in Dr. Pusey's book entitled "What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?" That help he longs to share with all who are sincerely troubled in regard to this appalling but inevitable subject.

CHRIST CHURCH,
Lent, 1886.

Everlasting Punishment.

"How can you tell me first that God is good, and then that He has created a vast multitude of people for no other end than that they may burn for ever in a place of torment which He has devised for them?"

This question, or something like it, is often asked, as though both the statements which it contains were parts of the Christian faith, and upheld by the Church of Christ. As a matter of fact, the first statement, that God is good, is the very starting-point of Christian teaching; the second is a caricature of Christianity, which any well-instructed believer would disown. In four points it is inconsistent with deliberate declarations of the most exact and careful writers in the Church. Let us take these four points in the order in which they come in the question, and see what the Christian Church really does say about them.

I. *"That God has created a vast multitude of people for no other end than that they may burn for ever."* On the contrary, the Bible says expressly

that God would have all men to be saved (1 Tim. ii. 4); that His will, when creating every separate man, has been that one more being might rejoice for ever in perfect and everlasting happiness. He has done everything, He will do anything, that can be done consistently with His general purpose in creation, to secure this end. What He will not do is to force men into bliss against their own deliberate, conscious, persistent, and fixed choice. He will not overpower and annihilate that freedom which makes us men. But it is certain that "none will be lost whom God can save, without destroying in them His own gift of free-will." So Dr. Pusey writes;¹ and he strictly expresses the mind of the Church.

II. "That *a vast multitude of people* are to burn for ever." Far from asserting this, the Bible and the Church only speak positively of one man in all the centuries of history as lost—namely, Judas Iscariot. Of no one else who has ever lived has any man any right or warrant to deny that he may be found at last in heaven. "We know that there will be the blessed, in rest and joy, in the presence of God. We know that there will be the rejected and the lost. We know this from the assurances of Scripture, in direct word, in mysterious figure. And here the New Testament leaves us, in dark-

¹ "What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?" p. 23.

ness, before the veil." So the Dean of St. Paul's writes;¹ and in a like sense Dr. Pusey says, "We know absolutely nothing of the proportion of the saved to the lost, or who will be lost; but this we do know, that none will be lost who do not obstinately to the end and in the end refuse God." These words are not quoted here for the sake of urging the great truths which they teach, nor with any thought of relying on the learning and authority of the writers; but simply to show that the doctrine of Christianity is utterly different from that implied in the challenge we are considering. For the same purpose; let us hear what a great Roman Catholic philosopher has said: "Take any one of the most notorious impiety, the greatest assailant of the Church, and ask the Church, 'Is this man lost?' The Church will always say, 'I do not know.' Try to find to-day one single priest who will tell you that Voltaire is lost. Several may say to you, 'I think it;' not one will ever say, 'In the name of the Catholic faith, I assert it.'" ²

III. That anybody will "*burn for ever in a place of torment.*" Again, let us set over against this representation of Christian teaching the clear and frank words of one who never dreamt of saying soft things, or putting any bit of truth into the

¹ "Human Life and its Conditions," p. 109.

² Gratry, "Philosophie du Credo," p. 182.

background by way of making it easy to agree and be comfortable—one who would have died sooner than swerve one inch from what he believed to be the doctrine of Christ and of His Church, and who yet writes thus: "With regard to the *nature* of the sufferings, nothing is matter of faith. . . . As to pains of sense, the Church has nowhere laid down as a matter of faith the material character of the worm and the fire, or that they denote more than the gnawing of remorse."¹ Thus, then, the vivid pictures of all kinds of horrible and savage and elaborate torture, which may be drawn sometimes by popular preachers, sometimes by indignant antagonists or distressed critics of Christianity, are no necessary part of the Church's teaching; and a man may be the most thorough-going of Christians, and yet believe that all the punishment of the lost will go on in their own wilful hearts, and be no more seen, no more inflicted upon them from without, than the passions, the hatred, the envy, which they may have cherished all through this life. So one whom the whole Church honours as a saint believed and declared: "There is no gnashing of corporeal teeth, nor any perpetual fire of corporeal flames, nor is the worm corporeal. The fire is that which the sadness over transgressions generates,

¹ Dr. Pusey, "What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?" p. 23.

because the sins pierce with compunction the mind and sense of the irrational soul of the guilty' ¹ And another ancient writer says, "The worm and the fire, which punish sinners, are the conscience of each, and the memory of the foul deeds committed in this life, which prey upon him like a worm, and scorch him like fire"

IV That any torment is "*devised for*" any given man by God—If hell contains one lost soul, it is not God's doing. It is the lost soul that is the true author of its ruin. People often talk as though God might, if He chose, take a soul out of hell and bring it into all the joy of heaven, but the truth is that such a soul would bring its own hell, its own torment, with it. "Nay, I will venture to say—it is fearful, but it is right to say it—that if we wished to imagine a punishment for an unholy, reprobate soul, we perhaps could not fancy a greater than to *summon it to heaven*" ² "Eternal damnation means leaving the sinner to himself. It is no arbitrary infliction. It is simply that God has at length withdrawn from His rebellious creature the care and gracious aid it had pertinaciously despised. The blessing comes from God, *the curse from the sinner himself*" ³ All the love of God, the very

¹ St Ambrose, quoted by Dr Pusey, p 20

² J H Newman, "Sermons for the Seasons," p 281

³ H N Oxenham, "Catholic Eschatology," p 71

same love which makes the joy of the saints, might stream around a lost soul, and only provoke it to a further bitterness and misery of hatred. Hatred can hate even love itself, and to hate love is already hell,—and then what can love do? All the light in the world can only show how black a coal is, and all the love in heaven could only bring out more horribly the fierceness of deliberate hate. You might as well charge light with making the blackness of the coal as blame God for the hatred and malevolence and self contempt which are the anguish of hell.

A poem appeared some time ago in the *Spectator*, which is not here referred to as exact Christian theology, and yet may serve to suggest how the very same sentence might sound to one man as the call to heaven, to another as the doom of hell—how that vast and utter difference might be really made by us in our own hearts, and not by God in heaven. The writer imagines two souls, set free by the death of their bodies, mounting up to receive God's verdict upon the things done in the flesh, and this is how the judgment is passed, first upon one, and then upon the other—

“ ‘Go thou and serve!’ the sentence came,
 ‘The Name of JESUS tell
 Preserve from death some dying soul!’
 Athwart the face there fell
 A lengthening shadow, and I heard
 A muttered groan of ‘Hell!’

“Go thou and serve” the soft voice said,
 ‘Vale noon of life’s dark even,
 Guide frail souls through earth’s storms, and bring
 Again the souls God given!’
 I saw a rapture lighted face
 Too blessed to answer ‘Heaven!’¹

Yes, “the blessing comes from God, the curse from the sinner himself”² Whoever may hereafter be in hell will contain and maintain its dreadful secret within himself, and *no one will be in hell who would not bring hell with him wherever he went*³

¹ “Songs in Minor Keys,” Mrs Edward Liddell The same mysterious thought seems to be indicated by the words of the Chorus in “The Heretic’s Tragedy” by Mr Browning—

“What maketh heaven, that maketh hell”

² Cf St Chrysostom, p 760, § C, contrasting St Matthew xxi 34 and 41 “But to these He says, ‘Depart from Me, ye cursed’ but no longer does He add, ‘by the Father,’ for it was not He who cursed them, but their own souls”

³ Cf a wonderful passage in Dr Newman’s “Callista,” chap xlii “Supposing you were among those whom you actually did *not* love, supposing you did *not* like them, nor their occupations, and could not understand their aims, suppose there be, as Christians say, one Almighty God, and you did not like Him, and had no taste for thinking of Him, and no interest in what He was and what He did, and supposing you found that there was nothing anywhere but He, Whom you did not love, and Whom you wished away, would you not be still more wretched? And if this went on forever, would you not be in great, inexpressible pain for ever?”

The words are put into the mouth of St Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, arguing with Callista, who shrinks from

In these four points, then the challenge here considered utterly misrepresents what a member of the Church is bound to believe. It is not denied that many Christian writers and preachers have given grounds for such misrepresentation. There have been times when good men, as well as bad, have failed to realize and weigh the full import of all words that speak of an everlasting lot—failed to make vivid to themselves the whole meaning of the truths they dealt with. And so the terror of falling utterly away from God, and the sternness which all sincere men in *every age* must see to be inseparable from a true religion, have been expressed in language which few could bear to use in our more careful and sensitive generation. It is to be admitted, then that passages are to be found, not, indeed in formal utterances of the Church, but in the writings of some even of her greatest teachers which strike a different note from that of the statements quoted here, and it is not to be pretended that all would even now at once accept those statements. But it is asserted that they are true expressions of a sound Christian faith, and that they show how unjustly that faith is caricatured when it is made responsible for opinions such as are implied in the challenge which we are meeting. Christianity in abhorrence from the doctrine of everlasting punishment

It is just possible that some one may say, "Well, if this is true, we've been rather unnecessarily frightened about hell."

Stop a bit, then ; and let us try to think of something that may, perhaps, be a little like hell according to this view of it.

Think of a man with a downright bad, ill-conditioned heart, coming home one evening from some place where he has been engaged in some vile, mean, degrading sin—coming home with his mind full of horrid lust and sullenness. His wife is waiting for him. She has tried to make the room look as bright as she can ; two of his children are staying up to kiss him, and say "Good night" to him before they go to bed. Everything has been thought of and planned to show him love, to give him pleasure ; and then, with nothing but passion and cruelty and anger in his heart, he comes up the stairs. As soon as he opens the door, he sees all the love that is waiting, bright and true and tender, to bid him welcome ; but it only hardens his cruel heart as fire hardens clay. He hates it all for being so unlike himself ; hates it for leaving him nothing to grumble at ; hates it because he knows he has no love in him with which to meet it. He scowls at the children, and curses his wife ; and then sits down by the fire, to spend his time in sulky silence and vile thoughts and stupid, senseless rage.

A hideous and ghastly picture, is it not? Who is to blame for it? *Anyhow, not the wife.*

We all know too well what the human heart may be in a humble earthly home, and during a few hours of time. Let us think of it as it enters a vast, unimaginable sphere, as it crosses the threshold of eternity. Just imagine a heart settled down utterly and deliberately into such a temper as has been above described; a heart that has finally stamped out of itself all lingering traits or movements of tenderness; a heart that has resolutely set itself to hate all love and innocence, so that the very thought of them only makes it more savage and impure; a heart in which there remains no faculty, no power of really loving anything at all.

What can such a heart do but only go on and on in the black despair and misery of perpetual hatred?

And how can such misery ever have an end?

And what is this but hell?

And who is to blame for it? *Anyhow, not Almighty God.*

"I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Christ and Morality.

PERHAPS the most important question which can be asked about any religion is, "What is its attitude to morality? What is its bearing upon our convictions of right and wrong?" We should, I mean, unhesitatingly reject any religion which did violence to those convictions; which ignored the nobler elements of man's nature, and taught him to act selfishly, cruelly, or dishonestly. A god who was not good could never win our faith. And on the other hand, a religion which stamps with its approval all that is best and highest in us, which sets up an ideal of purity which we recognize to be unsurpassable, which encourages our aspirations after good, confirms our deepest longings, and solves our most difficult problems,—such a religion has at any rate made out a certain claim on our respect, it demands serious consideration, and should not be rejected unless on an impartial inquiry it is found to bring with it insuperable difficulties. Such moral recommendations Christianity has generally been thought to possess; and some

difficulties which have been found in it are discussed in other papers of this series. But we see that the truth and beauty of Christian morality have been themselves denied, the teaching of Christ and His followers on moral questions has been declared to be unworthy and degrading, and so it has become necessary to give this criticism also a fair and frank consideration. I wish, then, in the present paper to examine as impartially as possible some of the chief objections which have been urged against the moral teaching of Christianity. And in order to give definiteness to the treatment, I shall select criticisms which have been published by Mrs Besant in the "Free thinker's Text-book," Part II § 3. I find there four main objections, which I shall take in order, and which may be tabulated thus. Christian morality, according to Mrs Besant,

I Is selfish

II Takes a false view of marriage and worldly occupations

III Is unmanly and effeminate

IV When true, is not original

I First, then, *Is Christian morality selfish?*

Mrs Besant writes, "The dogma of rewards and punishments as taught by Christ is fatal to all reality of virtue. To do right from hope of heaven, to avoid wrong for fear of hell,—such virtue is only skin-deep, and will not stand rough usage

Christianity is the apotheosis of selfishness gilded over with piety, self is the pivot on which all turns" (p 417)

Now, on one point I should go further than Mrs Besant. I should hold that to do right from hope of heaven, and to avoid wrong for fear of hell, is not even a skin-deep virtue, it is not virtue at all, and no one who taught such a "dogma" as moral would have any position as a moralist. It was certainly *not* taught by Christ or His disciples. I think, indeed, from her language quoted above, that Mrs Besant has failed to distinguish between two very different things—the *award* made by One Who judges a man's act, and the *motive* which leads the man to do the act. We are told that every good act, however small, shall have its reward at the last day, that is, that there is a moral government of the world, approving good and condemning evil. But we are not told that a good act is one which is done *for the sake of* that reward. On the contrary, that is an error that is carefully guarded against. Let us take an instance. Our Lord says, "Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (S Mark viii 35). We are not to lose our life (give up our private interests) in order to find it again in a future world, but we are to do this for Christ's sake, in order to carry on His work.

Take again the words quoted by Mrs Besant "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, He shall in no wise lose his reward." Here the motive or reason for the act is not said to be any selfish desire for the reward. The cup of water should be given, as Mrs Besant suggests, because the little one "is thirsty, and needs it." But this is just Christ's teaching. He tells us that the needs of the weak and destitute have a claim upon us, not merely for charity, but for love and devotion. And He gives the reason of this. They have this claim upon us because we are all one family, because God is our common Father, and all we are brethren. All through His teaching we see that the love of man, based on the love of a heavenly Father, is declared by Christ to be the bond of Christian society and the motive of Christian action. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect" (S Matt v 48), "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another" (S John xiii 34). Moreover, this love of man is to be shown, not only in devotion to the weak, but is to be extended also to those who have wronged us and who are our brethren still. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use

you and persecute you ; *that ye may be the children of your Father Which is in heaven*" (S. Matt. v. 44, 45). And this duty of love proceeds, not only from the fact of God's common Fatherhood, but also from the Divine Humanity of Christ Himself. We are to follow Him as our Lord and Master ; but then through His human birth all men have become His brothers ; He will accept no love that is not offered also to the least of those His brethren, and in loving them we are loving Him. In fact, those who will be finally punished are just those who have broken this law of love ; who have had no pity for the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner, and who, in rejecting them, have rejected Christ (S. Matt. xxv. 31, *et seq.*).

Such language is of itself sufficient to show how pure is to be the motive of Christian action. But we may just notice, in conclusion, how sternly Christ rebuked self-seeking in religion when the mother of S. James and S. John asked that her sons might have a position of pre-eminence in His kingdom. They knew not what they asked ; the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister ; and to be great in that kingdom is to be the minister and servant of all (S. Matt. xx. 20, *et seq.*).

I am sure Mrs. Besant would not have made this accusation but for the confusion I have alluded to above.

II. *The spiritual life in its relation to the domestic and the worldly life.*

Our Lord again and again insists on the supreme value and importance of a spiritual life—a life of union with God. It was His object to found a great religious society, free and open to all, offering membership to all men and all women, whatever their race and worldly position. And this universal society was capable of including within itself the smaller associations of family and trade. It was compatible with the matrimony of S. Peter and the tent-making of S. Paul. But the spiritual society was declared to be infinitely more important than any of these smaller associations; they must not be allowed to take its place. And there is always a danger of their doing so. The family life, good and sacred as it is, may become narrow and selfish, making its members forget that there is a wider family of all mankind. So again men's "business," the work they do in order to earn their daily bread, may make them hard and mercenary, may lead them to "sharp practice," and make them ignore the brotherhood of all men through a war of competition and the conflict of interests. It is such a state of things, the corruption of the family life and the corruption of the business life, that we are warned against by Christ.

Thus (a) *if* marriage, with its sexual relation and its engrossing cares, proves an obstacle to the higher life, then and only then is it an evil. "*If* thine eye offend thee, pluck it out : it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (S. Mark ix. 47). And the same principle applies to the passage quoted by Mrs. Besant from S. (Matthew xix. 11, 13). The fact is, that Christ saw the dangers of marriage, and warned men of them ; but the institution itself, in its true worth and dignity, was sacred in the eyes of Him Whose presence had hallowed the wedding-festival at Cana. And similar is the teaching of S. Paul. He saw that married people were in great danger of forgetting God in their endeavours to please each other ; and he gives advice which shows a deep and wide charity. He says that in his own opinion the single state is better, expressly adding that on this point he has received no commandment of the Lord. "But," he continues, "if thou marry, thou hast not sinned ; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh : but I spare you" (1 Cor. vii. 27, *et seq.*). And so again (vers. 39, 40), "The wife is bound by the Law as long as her husband liveth ; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will ; only

in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment."

In the light of such language, Mrs. Besant's remarks are somewhat surprising. She says, "The subjection of women in Western lands is wholly due to Christianity. . . . Christianity brought with it the evil Eastern habit of regarding women as intended for the toys and drudges of man, and intensified it with a special spite against them, as the daughters of Eve, who was first deceived" (p. 419). Mrs. Besant's argument is that Christianity regarded women as the toys and drudges of man, and condemned them accordingly. In matter of fact, what Christianity does condemn is just this toy-and-drudge view of women's calling, and the light in which it regards them is as having a spiritual life to live, as a hallowing influence either in matrimony or (with fewer impediments) in the single state (cf. 1 Cor. vii. 16 ; 1 Tim. ii. 9). The importance of that spiritual life in man and woman, and the duty of not becoming engrossed in that which is transitory,—this is the great principle at stake ; and it is well used by S. Paul to clinch the question at issue, "This I say, brethren, the time is short : it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as

though they possessed not, and they that use this world, as not abusing it for the fashion of this world passeth away (1 Cor. vii. 29-31)

(b) And the principle is much the same with regard to worldly occupations. Christianity sanctifies all honest work, remembering that for many years her Master lived in a carpenter's shop at Nazareth. And there is nothing in Christ's teaching at variance with His example. He only warns us not to allow our spiritual life of union with God to be choked and strangled by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. We are not to allow our membership in God's kingdom to be obscured by that mass of transitory hopes and fears and interests which He calls 'the world,' or 'mammon.' We are so to pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal. This is what He is insisting upon in those verses (at the end of St. Matthew's sixth chapter) which Miss Besant stigmatizes as "as mischievous a passage as has been penned by any moralist" (p. 415). I will quote the whole passage, and then consider the criticism—

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye

shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Now, in this passage our Lord (1) states a principle, (2) backs this principle by a promise, and

(3) confirms the promise by an illustration from nature

(1) The principle is that we cannot serve God and mammon, that is that we cannot give the first place in our affections to *both* the spiritual and the worldly life. And, further, we are told that our true life—the life which we ought to be anxious about—is not the worldly, but the spiritual life (Do not be anxious¹ about food and clothing. Seek first the kingdom of God). Here there does not seem to be much difficulty, and I will only notice in passing that Mrs. Besant naturally misses the general drift of the passage, by altogether ignoring ver. 24, in which the above principle is stated. When the context is thus mangled, the point of the promise and the illustration is naturally lost.

(2) Then follows the promise—that those who live the higher life shall not lack such necessities of the lower life as food and clothing. Compare the Psalmist's words, "I have been young, and now am old—and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread."

With regard to this promise, we must remember (which Mrs. Besant does not do) that it is conditional. *If* we seek first the kingdom of God, these

¹ This "do not be anxious about" is the simple literal meaning of the Greek words, which are improperly translated "take no thought for" in the English Version.

things will be added to us. And we must also remember that what is promised is not material luxury or affluence, but just what is necessary. This will be supplied ; so that we need not be anxious about it, but may transfer all anxious thought to the higher, spiritual life.

(3) Then comes the illustration. God will give us food and clothing, just as He feeds the birds and clothes the flowers. The point is that all the world is God's ; and that therefore the food and clothing which we acquire are just as much *given* to us as to the birds and flowers. They are as freely given, though in a different way, according to the difference of the recipients ; given to us, as rational beings, through our own intelligent exertions ; given to the irrational creation through obedience to instinct or the laws of vegetable life. The lesson is, not that we are to renounce our own endowment of reason, and force ourselves down to the position of the birds and flowers ; but that we should trust in Him Who created us as well as them, and believe that He will bless our use of the powers He has given us for our support, as freely as He blesses the unthinking life of His other creatures.

III. *Is Christian morality unmanly ?*

Mrs. Besant declares that it is. "It is full of exhortations to bear, to suffer, to be patient ; it

sorely lacks appeals to patriotism, to courage, to self-respect." She also suggests that "Jesus was very effeminate" (p. 411).

Now, I do not think that I need deal at much length with this allegation. I will only ask—Who is the brave man? Is it he who will calmly and fearlessly stand by the cause he believes to be right; who, without bluster or bravado, will go through with his work, unmoved by danger, ridicule, or misunderstanding; who will speak out for the truth where the "effeminate" would keep silence; who will be tender and gentle with the weak, and stern in his condemnation of shams and hypocrisy; who, whether in peace or war, will do his duty to the end, though that end may be an undeserved and cruel death? If this is what we mean by "manliness" and "courage," then I assert that Jesus Christ was manly in a degree unequalled in the history of the world. And was there no appeal to "courage" and "self-respect" in His followers—when a handful of ignorant men went out, at His bidding, to confront the world and face all the terrors of the civil and religious powers of the day? And was not an heroic "patriotism" displayed by S. Paul, in his refusal, on the one hand, to ignore or renounce the high privileges of the Jewish nation to which he belonged, and in his refusal, on the other hand, to allow these prerogatives to hamper the free citizen-

ship of all men in Christ's universal kingdom (cf. among many passages, Rom. ii., iii., and ix.)?

It is true that Christian energy and Christian courage are to be exercised in the service of a spiritual, and not of a temporal, society. But do they cease to be energy and courage *because* they are directed to the highest possible object—the object of making Christ's kingdom come on earth in justice, mercy, and righteousness? Their character may be illustrated by that parable of the unjust steward (S. Luke xvi.), which Mrs. Besant declares to be “thoroughly immoral.” This parable is a protest against slackness and apathy on the part of religious people. It urges that the energy, resourcefulness, and presence of mind which the “children of this world” often turn to selfish and dishonest purposes, may be consecrated to a higher use. It points to the vigour with which the powers and faculties of humanity are employed in the devil's service—powers and capacities which, as thus employed, become “the mammon of unrighteousness;” and it insists that we should “make friends” of that mammon, should lead it back to higher things, enlist it in Christ's service, and make it do God's work in the world. Just as, in music, “the devil oughtn't to have all the best tunes”—so in life as a whole, he ought not to be allowed to usurp our highest energies of will and

intellect. The energies of a lifetime can find no purer aim and no wider scope than in carrying on the work of Christ; and a closing life can contain no "manlier" memories than the sense of having "fought a good fight" in His battle against misery and sin.

IV. *Is Christianity original? and in what sense?*

Mrs. Besant takes great pains to show that many of the moral principles taught by our Lord and His followers had been expressed earlier by teachers of other religions, and that others again have been maintained subsequently from a non-Christian standpoint. "All that is fair and beautiful in Christian morality had been taught in the world ages before Christ was born. Buddha, Confucius, Lao-Tsze, Mencius, Zoroaster, Manu, taught the noble human morality found in some of the teaching ascribed to Christ" (p. 403). And so again in the *National Reformer* for August 8, 1886: "That Christianity teaches some noble moral truths, all admit; but that these are revelations, we deny; and their non-originality is, of course, an objection against Christianity as a revelation, though no objection against it as a moral system."

Now, I hope Mrs. Besant will forgive me if I say that this argument consists of a truism and a fallacy. It is a truism that many of the moral precepts of Christianity have been independently

enforced both before and after the life of Christ. It is a fallacy to infer that *therefore* nothing new or original was done by Christ for morality. I will take these two points in order.

First, then, this independent witness to the truth of our morality is just what would be expected by every one who has given any thought to ethical questions. Human nature does not, in its main outlines, vary much from age to age; and to read its facts aright requires nothing more than an unusual degree of honesty and intelligence. The work of the moral philosopher is to explain the confused and inconsistent ideas which people have as to their duty; and this he does by clearing these ideas from all that is accidental and irrelevant, and by showing how all the different duties have one single principle underlying them. To do this well, to understand the truth thoroughly, and to state it simply, demands a wisdom which is indeed within the reach of few, but which we all gladly recognize in the great sages of the world—in Plato and Aristotle, in Buddha, Zoroaster, and Confucius. An adequate statement of moral truth demands nothing more than a very pure heart, a very clear head, and a very deep experience; and no one pretends that pure hearts, clear heads, and experience of the world are exclusive products of Christianity. And so I readily welcome the appo-

site illustrations of Christian morality which Mrs. Besant quotes from the wise men of the East ; and I may, perhaps, be allowed to suggest, by way of additions to her list, that Aristotle describes the moral struggle in language closely resembling St. Paul's, and that Plato supplies an interesting parallel to our Lord's account of the evil spirit's return "to the house whence he went out."

And this brings me to my other point—that there is nothing in these facts which a Christian would be in the least inclined to ignore or to deny, nothing which is inconsistent with the originality of Christian morality. For this morality is original in two great points, neither of which is affected by anything which those facts contain.

First, it is original in the nature of the principle which it states as underlying the different duties. This is the principle of love—the love of man, not as a mere vague emotion of sympathy, which may vary in strength from hour to hour, and may be ousted at any moment by some stronger passion ; nor, again, as an easy-going optimism, which expresses an equal enthusiasm for all human instincts, the mean and creeping, as well as the lofty and unselfish ; but love as a reasoned principle, based on the fact of a common creation, and purified by the example of the perfect humanity of Christ. Such a principle of duty was new in its union of

deep feeling with a fine discrimination ; and it was new in its universal application. The love of man was not to be love of a particular set of men, but love of all mankind ; the duties flowing from it were not to be confined to the bounds of a single tribe or state, but were to hold everywhere between man and man. The distinction (which vitiated Greek morality) between citizens, to whom a high morality was due, and aliens, to whom no duties were recognized, disappeared in the Christian system ; the limitations were abolished ; all were brought within the pale of morality ; and the principle of love in its true comprehensiveness, allowing no exemptions and extending to all the world, was first stated by Christianity.

And, secondly, Christian morality is original, not only in the philosophic principle which it states, but also in the motive power which it supplies. Indeed, with regard to morality, the Christian religion presents itself as a *revelation of power* even more than as a *revelation of duty*. It not only restates men's duty from the standpoint of a higher and purer principle, but also supplies them with a new help to the performance of that duty. And this new power, it tells us, we derive from a union with Jesus Christ. Faith in Him possesses a power to raise a man to a higher level of life and action, to re-create him in the pure humanity of Christ.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). This renovating power works by many channels—by the force and tenderness of His teaching, by the attraction of His example, and by those Sacraments which give the closest union of all, incorporating us into membership in Him.

And we must remember that this revelation of power is made in the teaching of our Lord as well as in that of His followers. The Master as well as the disciple insists on the power which faith in Christ possesses to "inform the will and purify the heart." Indeed, what Christ taught was not so much a code of morals; it was something at once simpler and more stupendous, namely, devotion to Himself as the Spring of all morality. It was His object, not so much to urge men to perform different acts of virtue, as to secure to them that living union with Himself from which all virtues would naturally flow. He led them back from effect to cause, from results in the way of godly living to Himself as the Source of life. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (S. John x. 10); "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (S. John xiv. 6); "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (S. Matt. xi. 28);

"The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (S. Mark ii. 10); "Without Me ye can do nothing" (S. John xv. 5). Such words involve stupendous claims; and they serve to clear the issue before us. The real question which Mrs. Besant should have raised, as to the moral teaching of Christ, is not whether some of the truths He insisted on are independently attested, or, again, whether some of Christ's precepts have been misinterpreted by certain Christians. The real issue is simpler. He asserts that personal devotion to Himself is the essence and the condition of a perfect life. Such an assertion, if made by a mere man, would betray an insufferable arrogance which must forfeit all our respect for him who made it. We should feel pity for such a man, if we could trace these pretensions back to some strange form of self-deception, some hallucination over which he had no control; otherwise we should despise him as an impostor. Are we to apply such a treatment to the claims of Christ? Or shall we say that His calm wisdom and the piercing insight which He showed into the depths of the human soul are incompatible with the theory of an utter self-deception; and that, on the other hand, His complete unselfishness repels the merest suggestion of imposture? To put it shortly, the question is—Are we to hold that Christ was either

a dupe or an impostor? or are we to admit that these high claims are justified because He Who made them is the Saviour of the world? We Christians believe that, on a thorough and impartial study of the records, the latter course is the easier and more reasonable; and that the position which Christ claims with regard to morality, not only vindicates the originality of His teaching, but is also His due, Who in the beginning was with God and was God.

The Discipline of Self.

DURING the elections of 1885 a placard appeared in one of the suburban districts, containing a protest against stringent Temperance legislation, on the ground of its being an infringement of "liberty." This cry, "Liberty in danger!" is a grand one, to be sure, and rouses in us a right-minded jealousy. But, in the present case, the question naturally occurs, "Is liberty (in the sense intended by the placard) such a great blessing after all?" We know facts enough bearing on the drink question to make us pretty sure that "liberty" is, to many, more of a danger than a help. Many use their freedom in a way that tends to the enslavement of themselves; and it is, perhaps, noteworthy that, just where this right passion for liberty is strongest—I mean, in the north of England—there is the widest prevalence of those intemperate habits which practically end in slavery.

Altogether, this appeal to the love of liberty is, we should probably agree, misleading. We want to have clear ideas as to the restrictions under

which liberty is good. Why is the appeal to it at once so inspiring and so perilous? What is it in the present social condition of our country that makes personal freedom such an illusive thing? In a word, why is it that England, "the sanctuary of liberty," is also so weakened and degraded by enslaving national habits and huge national sins? For, remember, we no longer speak of "the national sin." It is not only the vice of intemperance which sometimes makes the future of our country look so dark: there are other great evils, not less deadly because less exposed to public view; other great instances of the abuse of liberty—impurity, for instance, and the unrestrained passion for wealth.

In speaking of "national sins" we touch upon the main truth which this paper is intended to enforce. The phenomena of social disorder have, as we know, engaged the anxious and patient attention of many minds. Indeed, one thing which in some sense unites Oxford to East London is this, that in both the great social questions have long been prominent subjects of interest and anxious inquiry. Remedies—widely different—have been suggested for the seemingly desperate evils which beset modern civilization. But we are beginning at last to see that to treat these questions as simply economic, in the narrow sense, is a mistake. The great evils of the time—*e.g.* the

unequal distribution of wealth, with all that it involves of widespread want, suffering, and misery—have their root in the *moral condition of society*. So that it was recently pointed out by a thoughtful writer on these questions, that "the path of true progress lies almost entirely in the amelioration of the *moral condition*" of the people.¹

It might be added that Mr. Henry George, in his celebrated book, while suggesting an economic remedy for our troubles, which authorities judge to be radically unsound, yet gives a hint, at the close of his work, as to the true direction which efforts after improvement should take.

"We see," he says, "that *human will* is the great factor, and that, taking men in the aggregate, their condition is as they make it, . . . that *economic law* and *moral law* are essentially one."²

Our hope, then, of improvement depends largely on moral conditions. If wealth were redistributed to-morrow, who can doubt that the present evils must shortly reappear—traceable as they are to moral, rather than economic, causes? So long as there exist grasping, selfish, short-sighted, wasteful, imprudent, self-indulgent men, we shall have to deal with social distress and disorder.

Thus the truth which we must make clear to

¹ Wylie, "Labour, Leisure, and Luxury," p. 144.

² "Progress and Poverty," p. 503.

ourselves is this—that the secret of improvement lies not in unrestrained liberty, but in liberty rightly used, not in the temper which clutches at rights but in that which realizes duties, not in the power of unrestricted indulgence, but in the spirit of SELF DISCIPLINE. Many attempts to improve the condition of men have been made, but have *failed*, because those who led or took part in them misunderstood the real forces which produce the desired result. It is not violence, or self interest, or passion, surely, that work out great purposes or achieve great things in this world, rather we must look to the tried *character*, the disciplined *will*, the well directed *energy*, the rightly used *liberty*. These are powers indeed.

I. But what is meant by "Discipline of Self"?

We shall best understand by an illustration.

After a battle, a commander usually issues a 'general order, in which he commends the troops for their steadiness in the engagement, and the valour and "discipline" they have displayed. Over and over again in the history of great wars "discipline" has been the effective force which triumphed over numbers, and even over desperate valour. It was so with the armies of ancient Rome, it was so with our own troops in the battles of the Soudan campaign. Clearly "discipline" implies two things—an unwavering power of control

in the leader ; a perfect subordination in the ranks. These two things—the control, the subordination—are together the real condition of effectiveness and success.

As it is with an army, so it is with the individual man. He, too, is called upon to command—to exercise rule. He, too, has instincts, passions, faculties, which need to be kept in subordination and control. The discipline of self is a process which gradually brings about this state of control. Its object is at once to train and strengthen the will—to make it an effective, because a regulated, restrained, and well-governed, force.

It was said of a noble woman that "she was always anxious to become all she could be rather than to do great things." *That* is the value of freedom : it is our great chance to become *all we could be*. In fact, "liberty," if it is to be in any sense a benefit, means, simply, freedom for self-development. The whole question is—How shall we use our freedom? Shall we indulge our desires, or control them? Shall we master them, or let them master us? Shall we waste and neglect this force of will, or shall we strengthen, expand, and discipline it? Is Will to be slave or master—a plaything or a POWER?

The means of using freedom rightly, and of giving will its due supremacy, can only be Self-discipline.

II Next we ask—Why is this Discipline of Self so essential to personal character and to social progress?

(1) In the first place, Self-discipline is the real secret of self improvement

If we aim at becoming “all we *could* be, we must look at our complex nature as a whole, we must try to develop each part of that nature evenly and harmoniously

Human nature, we say, is complex—it has different elements—body, mind, and something higher than either, the spiritual faculty, or soul

Science has taught us much as to the interdependence of these three elements. We now know, as scientific truth, that the perfection and well being of each part depends on the sound condition of the other parts. Over-develop or stifle any part of your nature, and the whole suffers. Train the body exclusively, and you become a tame animal, cultivate the mental faculties exclusively, and you become a thinking-machine. In any case you will not become a *perfectly developed man*. Nothing, indeed, is more wonderful than this perfect balance and adjustment of our different faculties. If we abuse or injure any part of them, the whole nature suffers—the weakening of the body impairs the vigour of the mind, the character is, even to our dull eyes, often reflected in the face

So the self-improvement we aim at must never be allowed to become a *one-sided improvement*. We don't want to be half developed, we have a higher purpose—we would be as nearly perfect as we are free to become, as the conditions of our life allow.

What we have to remember, then, is that the condition of perfection is Self-restraint. Otherwise there is the danger of one part of our nature, especially the lower part, obtaining undue prominence and mastery. Each part must be trained, disciplined, educated for its own rightful function, and the trouble of the process is a thousandfold repaid by the result.

One of the best descriptions of the perfectly self-disciplined man that I know of is to be found in one of Professor Huxley's essays, and the passage may fittingly close these remarks on self-improvement.

The disciplined man is one "who has been so trained in youth that his *body* is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of, whose *intellect* is a clear, cold, logic-engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order, ready, like a steam-engine, to be turned to any kind of work, . . . whose *mind* is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of Nature and of the law of her operations, one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but

*Those persons are trained to come to feel as a
servant of all, the servant of a tender conscience
who has learned to love all beauty, whether of
nature or of art, to hate all wickedness, and to respect
others as himself.*

(2) Another reason there is why Self discipline
is so necessary, it has already been hinted at, and
may now be discussed more at length. Self-
discipline is the condition, in great measure, of
economical improvement.

We must begin by recalling to our minds for a
moment the present social condition of England,
and ask what are the facts which lie on the surface
and imperatively claim attention. First, there is
the condition of trade—the depression of almost
every kind of industry, and the consequent holding
in of capital, and scarcity of employment. Then,
again, there are the difficulties caused by pressure
of population—the pauperism and suffering which
it involves, the low rate of wages, the dearness of
food, the struggle for bare existence. Lastly, as the
chief source of discontent and exasperation, there
are the inequalities in the distribution of wealth—
the destitution which prevails in the midst of
abundance.

Now, in saying something on each of these
points, our object is to inquire simply how far the
distress universally prevailing is connected with

moral causes. For our present purpose we may dismiss the various *economic* theories which have been suggested to account for the facts, nor is it necessary to trace the connection between the different symptoms of disorder. The question for us is this: how far the effort of human will can control or modify the conditions leading to the present state of things,—what can be done by the discipline of character to touch the heart of all the mischief?

First, as to the condition of trade

There is a question which still stands in the very forefront of economic discussions—the question of co-operation—how far it can be applied, and what are its necessary restrictions. Great hopes have justly been built on co-operation. One writer tells us it will probably afford in time ‘a splendid solution of the most vexed of all social questions’¹. And yet we know there have been instances in which this great movement failed. The explanation of that fact is closely connected with moral, rather than material, causes. One who may truly be said to have met his death² while labouring for the working classes, tells us, in speaking of one particular co-operative movement, that “it broke

¹ Wylie, “Labour, Leisure, and Luxury,” p. 148

² Arnold Toynbee, “Criticism of Mr. H. George,” p. 44 [Kegan Paul]

down because workmen were not yet fit to co-operate. . . . You cannot," he continued, "and you *will* not obtain any great material change for the better unless you are also prepared to make an effort to advance in your moral ideas."

This was not, at the time when it was uttered, a palatable truth; but since then it has, perhaps, gained a better chance of a hearing. Certainly a great social movement is no mere effort to better our own condition, without regard to the interests of other classes or to the claims of equity. Nor is it carried out by such weak weapons as violence, greed, and passion; it needs fine instruments and great qualities—self-restraint, self-sacrifice, patience, endurance, forbearance. Without these no great cause was ever won, or ever will be. Those who would take part in such a movement as that in question must prepare themselves for their work by Self-discipline.

One more witness may be quoted before we leave this point. He says, "The bulk of the working classes are as yet far from having attained to *anything like* the elevation of *moral tone* requisite for this system of labour, and are for the present safer under the tutelage of the capitalist."¹

Thus we may trace failure in the solution of a labour problem to moral causes—to a failure in

¹ Wylie, p. 154.

character. And therein lies ground for hope. It is a great thing to feel that we have touched something which lies in the control of the human will ; that, at any rate, one opening for amendment is offered to us.

Another vexed and difficult problem is presented by over-population. The rate of wages and the price of necessities largely depend on its solution. It is one of the standing difficulties of the present condition of Ireland. Mr. George devotes a large portion of his book to the subject ; and his conclusion is that the Malthusian theory fails to explain the facts with which it professes to deal. I am not now concerned with theories of population. The subject is complicated and delicate ; but surely, if in any case, in this it is clear that the real causes of disorder are *moral*. As Mr. George says, "Human will is the great factor." There is, in fact, a twofold way of contributing to the solution of this question—one appeals to the lower, the other to the higher self in each man.

The lower way is set forth in such literature as the "Malthusian leaflets." In one of these, which need not be discussed, statements appealing to class prejudice are made which can only be excused by the apparently sincere desire to bring about a more hopeful condition of things. Terribly mistaken these statements are, and likely to do harm ;

but the suggestions for overcoming the difficulty contained in such papers as these stand self-condemned so long as a worthier course is open to us. The best solution must be the truest.

The right way to deal with the population question is to trace its connection with human *character* and *will*. No one can doubt that the remedy lies in a more widely prevailing spirit and power of Self-discipline. There is the possibility of acquiring an effective control over passion and natural instincts. It is *that* to which we should look; *that* is the only solution worthy of *man*, which demands some high form of effort on their part, and depends on a victory of the higher self over the lower; which, in a word, bears the mark of discipline, sacrifice, and perhaps noble pain.¹

¹ Cf. Malthus, "Essay on the Principles of Population," bk. iv. ch. i.

"And if *moral restraint* be the only virtuous mode of avoiding the incidental evils arising from this principle" [of population], "our obligation to practise it will evidently rest exactly upon the same foundation as our obligation to practise any of the other virtues."

Malthus has been showing that the principle of population requires "not diminution or alteration," but "regulation and direction."

See also Book iv. ch. ii. : "These considerations show that the virtue of chastity is not, as some have supposed, a forced product of artificial society; but that it has the most real and solid foundation in nature and reason; being apparently the only virtuous means of avoiding the vice and misery which result so often from the principle of population."

Another point must be briefly touched upon—the inequalities of the distribution of wealth. There are two distinct moral factors very prominent in a fair consideration of this class of difficulties.

There is the want of a power to save; it is a defect closely connected with forms of unrestrained self-indulgence. Let me give an illustration. Some little time ago a member of Parliament spoke as follows on the drink question:—

“In 1876 the Drink Bill rose to £147,000,000. The extravagance which then characterized daily life was due partly to the prosperity of trade, and partly to the extreme amount of money which came into this country, owing to the foolish war on the Continent between France and Germany. The money came so fast that those who had been little used to the handling of any large sums hardly knew what to do with it. In the manufacturing districts of the north the people lived almost like princes; . . . they spent their money freely in every kind of extravagant thing, but most of all on the extravagance of drink.”

The best comment on this statement is supplied by the history of many a large manufacturing town of the north since that time. It is well known that the rate of wages (*e.g.* in the ship-building trade) during that time was unusually high. It was an unequalled opportunity for the exercise of thrift,

foresight, self-restraint ; it offered a great chance for self-culture, for saving, for extending the work of provident and friendly societies. But the good time passed away ; and the history of the last two winters in the north has shown that the recklessness and wastefulness of past years have not been without bitter and miserable fruit.

Another secret of economical difficulties is the unrestrained passion for wealth. The desire for wealth is a necessary instinct ; but it has in numberless cases among the working and middle classes degenerated into an absorbing passion ; and passion fostered and indulged tends to widen the area over which its consequences extend. It seems never to occur to a man possessed by this spirit that this instinct of money-getting is limited by moral considerations—duty to family, to fellow-workmen, to the nation at large. He sees that in the case of other passions it is his interest to exercise some measure of self-control. In their case most men will admit the claim and the restraint of duty or social necessity. What is needed is that this sense of duty and responsibility should be extended to the money-making instinct. Here, too, self-repression, self-mastery, is needed. Let other claims—those of self-respect, justice, honour, humanity—have a fair chance. Political economy takes account of men simply as money-getting animals. It isolates

one class of social phenomena. Clearly what must necessarily modify the conclusions of the science is the free play of *other* human instincts—the exertion of power by enlightened and educated human wills.

One striking illustration of the way in which the passion for wealth interferes with social progress may be drawn from the recent history of trade-unions. Few would dispute that their action has been in some cases economically unsound. But the point to be now noted is, that where this has been so, it has been due to defective *morale*. Quite recently an account of the distress in East London was published, in which the writer mentions the strike of the Scissors-Forgers' Union in 1874. The times were almost unprecedentedly *good*. Yet the Union gave the order to strike for a higher rate of wages—a rate which, it is said, some of the men themselves owned to be extortionate. The inevitable result was that greed overreached itself; foreign competition seized the chance; and the trade has been driven to Germany.¹

We have now touched upon several important subjects—not for the purpose of exhaustive treatment, but by way of illustrating the connection between social evil and defects of *character*; in other words, the lack of Self-discipline. At any rate, we have seen enough to assure us that this

¹ See Mr. Krausse, "Starving London," chap. xviii.

Discipline of Self is a real factor in social questions. With other great subjects at present engaging public attention it is intimately connected, e.g. with the question of improved dwellings and of acquisition of property by working men.

But space will not admit of more than a reference to subjects other than those already discussed.

Speaking generally, however, it is well to reflect upon the position which the workman has gradually and rightfully won for himself in this country. It is a fact of real gravity that he is still engaged to a great extent in a struggle for *rights*, instead of trying to measure his *responsibilities*.

Think of this. A great position assuredly has great duties. The working classes have reached a point in which they are called to share in the government of the country. They forget—naturally perhaps—that they are called to a magnificent heritage of *duty*. They now take part in the control of an empire. They have to direct and share in movements for the political education of their class. How can men be fitted for work like this who have yet to learn the rudiments of self-mastery? Nay, if we limit our view, and consider merely that the workman is engaged in a personal competitive struggle for employment and independence, it must be pointed out that, even in that limited personal struggle, as well as in the larger

sphere of public duty, success depends on *character*, and the secret of character is Self-discipline. It is the restraint of personal liberty—the economy, right direction, due control of energy, that achieves great success and attains high ends. It is the condition of excelling long since taught us that “he that striveth for the mastery is *temperate* [*i.e.* Self-disciplined] in all things.”

III. This paper is meant to be practical in its suggestions, and perhaps too much space has been spent on pointing out the importance and power of Self-discipline.

But it may be said, “It is easy work preaching and quoting books; but how will that teach me Self-control? That is what I want to learn. Tell me how to acquire it.”

I would try to meet this question by first stating the difficulty clearly, and then pointing out the right direction in which to look for a remedy.

Most of us are conscious of the strength of different natural desires. We know that if they become uncontrolled they are dangerous to us, and must injure our usefulness. And many a man is hindered in life by some bad habit which clings to him and weakens him, whether by impairing his self-respect, or making him distrusted, or keeping him out of employment. For good work needs fine instruments. But the difficulty is to break

loose or control such a habit. Where are we to look for help in this matter of Self-discipline? What is it that can produce this disciplined *will* which is the secret of strong character?

Clearly it is not enough to train the intellect. There are not a few examples of men with splendid intellectual powers who yet lacked character. One melancholy instance in English history is that of Francis Bacon. The end of his career was a pitiable one : in spite of great gifts, varied learning, and wonderful versatility, he died a degraded, dishonoured, unsuccessful man. He lacked moral power. Our present system of education can do, and is, of course, doing, much ; it is surely, though perhaps slowly, tending to diminish pauperism ; it is giving workmen greater dexterity, insight, quickness, patience ; it is training them in prudential habits. But will it do much for moral character and will ? Will it strengthen the *power* of Self-control ?

That is a question to which different answers might be given. But experience seems to point to one only force as really effective in the case of the majority of men—the power of Religious Faith.

The secret of the power of Religion to go straight to the root of the matter, by supplying a motive for Self-discipline, lies chiefly in two things.

(1) Religion teaches us the truth about the human body.

(2) The true meaning of freedom.

(1) The truth about the body.

It is the body which is the instrument of self-indulgence. Mysteriously linked as it is to the spiritual part of our nature, it profoundly affects spiritual energies either for good or evil. A man, we know, is most often ruined by bodily excess—"ruined;" that is, useless for all good service, like a dead branch, helpless and unhelpful.

Now, Religion tells us that this body is a sacred thing. This is a very old and a very inspiring belief. Great heathen philosophers spoke of the body, centuries ago, as a temple, the dwelling-place of a Divine Being. Thus the wise Seneca speaks of God as "near us, with us, within us," "lodging in the human body." And another gentle spirit of a rather later period says, "Thou bearest God about with thee. Within thyself thou bearest Him, and thou dost not feel that thou art defiling Him with thy impure thoughts and thy filthy deeds."

Such is the teaching of what we call "Natural Religion." It is needless to point out the emphatic way in which Christianity takes up and illuminates this truth, with its central doctrine that God became Man—took our flesh, and made this weak body of ours the instrument of His power, the source of blessing, the tabernacle of His majesty; so for ever

setting the seal of holiness on human bodies, and making them temples of a Divine Spirit.

So we find a heroic man, who finally suffered cruel martyrdom at Rome, so filled with a sense of the power of this truth, that he called himself "Theophoros," *i.e.* one who carried God within him.

It seems to have been a name by which he ever reminded himself of the sanctity of his body ; it helped him to control passion—to feel that God was within him ; that his body was a holy thing, not to be defiled by shameful handling or excess.

There are certain forms of moral disorder which this truth of the sanctity of the body seems specially qualified to subdue. Nothing else, it has been said, than Religious Faith will keep man pure. Greece was not saved by her "divine philosophy," or her love of beauty, or her development of art. Rome was not saved by her ring-fence of law. "It is *a simple historical fact* that, among all nations and in all ages, belief in Christ alone has fought and mastered the sins of the flesh."¹

This is the testimony of many a man whom education and culture have not protected from his own undisciplined desires. In the case of habits of fleshly indulgence, of whatever kind, it has been proved by experience that Religious Faith is indeed "the power of God unto salvation."

¹ Mr. Wilson, "Address on Sins of the Flesh." [Social Purity Alliance.]

(2) And now a few words as to the truth about freedom.

We have said something already of the difference between true and apparent freedom. Were an intemperate man to say to me, "I am free, and can do as I please," I should answer, "Quite true, so far as words go. But if we look at facts, you are a slave; you are not your own master; you are simply at the mercy of your own desires."

I should then try to explain to him that there is another sort of freedom—to which Seneca referred when he said, "To obey God is liberty;" which Christianity teaches in its doctrine that God's service is perfect freedom.

To be really free we must conquer self—control the body, with its passions and cravings. God alone is perfectly free; and we can only become free by growing more like Him.

To be gentle, merciful, self-sacrificing, pitiful, tender to the weak, pure, temperate,—that is to be free—free from the dominion of passion and uncontrolled desires.

But to have rights which we cannot safely enjoy, to be greedy, grasping, selfish, lustful, intemperate, is to be far worse off than a bonds slave.

We want to be free, surely, with this highest kind of freedom. It is not an industrial revolution that will give us that. It might conceivably put

wealth or power in our hands, but they would soon prove a curse, and not a blessing ; for we have not yet learned how to use them aright. But this freedom, which consists in righteousness, is *not* beyond our reach if we intelligently set ourselves in the right way to attain it. And it may be, in time to come, that we shall bear our part in making this England of ours in reality, and not in name, a land of free men.

But even if this prospect be far distant, at least we may learn, from what has been said, to think more correctly about so-called social problems. We have, perhaps, seen enough to convince us that, after all, neither socialism, nor State interference, nor nationalization of land, nor emigration, nor any other of the remedies suggested nowadays for social disorder, really touch the root of the evils they profess to cure.

For the disorders of a state are ultimately to be traced to faults of heart and character and will. So that we are justified in beginning with ourselves : we are clearly helping the cause we have at heart in trying to make ourselves and others, so far as in us lies, better and more disciplined men.

Fraternity.

FRATERNITY means Brotherhood; and when we say that we believe in the Brotherhood of man, we do not mean only that we give an intellectual assent to the proposition, "All men are brethren." We mean to assert a living and present *fact* of human nature, on the basis of which we claim that the whole structure of civilized society should be built. We mean that "Brotherhood" is the fundamental relation in which human beings stand to one another; that the ordinary "classes" of society are, by the side of it, conventional and transitory; that any Constitution or scheme of government which does not recognize this fraternity as its chief corner-stone, is, in the face of modern political forces, foredoomed to failure. Tory or Radical, Aristocratic or Democratic—no Government can live in these days which does not recognize that the State is ONE, and that "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it."

This has not always been the case. Though, as

will be shown presently, "Fraternity" has always been a *Christian* watchword, it has only of late become a political one. Legislation has often been directed to serve class-interests—not the interests of the whole community. Certain citizens have been and are in the enjoyment of privileges—not earned, as they rightfully might be, through the performance of duties for the State, but simply the outcome of hereditary transmission. Laws have been made in the interest of landlords and capitalists who were already strong enough; and while a few have prospered and grown rich, the many have been reduced to poverty and impotence. Instead of Fraternity, there has been strife; class set against class, interest against interest, man against his fellow. This kind of thing has always been amongst us—perhaps to some extent it always will be; but the spirit of Fraternity is against it, and within the last half-century the spirit of Fraternity has grown strong. We have begun to think of the State as the instrument of the citizens, not their oppressor; we see that many evils can be brought to an end by a *common* effort, with which individuals singly are too weak to cope; in a word, for the idea of struggling against one another, we are substituting that of helping one another.

We may see this on a small scale by reflecting

on the progress which the *Co-operative* movement has made of late years. Co-operation is a plan by which a number of men club together, either for the purpose of producing some article of exchange by their joint labour, or again for that of distributing among themselves articles which they require. In one case the need for an employer, in the other the agency of a retail dealer, is dispensed with ; and thus money is gained or saved by the workers. But the very existence of such co-operative societies shows us how the idea of Fraternity is growing ; a man feels that he and his neighbours are one, and that they must sink or swim together. Again, let us consider the social and political ideas of our own generation. We hear a great deal nowadays of Socialism and Socialists. "Socialism" has a meaning not unlike that of "Fraternity ;" but Socialists have a bad name, because they so often set the lessons of history at defiance, and try to realize their ideas all at once. This means Revolution, and History shows that Revolutions are not good for the working classes. They frighten capital away from a country, and at best they merely change the men in whose hands the government is, and do little to remove the inequalities of fortune which make against Fraternity. But though no set scheme of Socialism seems likely to be carried out, the air is full of Socialistic *ideas*, and these help

to mould the aims and efforts of legislators. We are much more alive than we were to the need of limiting individual freedom, where this seems to be at all likely to be hurtful to the community at large. There are certain kinds of labour, and certain forms of trade, and certain kinds of land-tenure, with which the State interferes: we prohibit the employment of children beyond certain limits; and we interfere, and shall probably interfere further, with the drink-traffic; and we make efforts to secure a tenant against the abuse of freedom of contract. All such legislation, as well as that by which education is made a department of State, is "Socialistic" in the sense that the State or community now does as a whole what a few years ago would have been left to private individuals. Many schemes more or less inspired by such ideas are even now before the House of Commons; but enough has been said to remind us how strong is the idea of Fraternity in our own generation. And we can see it working just as strongly across the sea in the legislation of Monarchical Germany as in that of Constitutional England.

But the object of this paper is not only to exhibit the meaning and present importance of Fraternity; we want also and chiefly to consider its relation to Christianity. It may be well to begin by reminding

ourselves that Fraternity, if, on the one hand, it means the helping of the individual through his kinship with the many, yet, on the other hand, makes demands upon the individual himself—demands which, if he does not fulfil, then the force of Fraternity is made of none effect. If much is given to the individual, much also is required from him. He must be self-denying for the sake of others; and he must be as honest in labouring for the good of all as he is now in labouring for the good of himself. These are great virtues, and they are not to be acquired without effort and self-discipline. We must do many things we do not like—must often repress ourselves and our private ambitions—if we are going, not only to assert the Brotherhood of man, but to *act* upon that assertion. We cannot too often say to ourselves that Fraternity means sacrificing something to our fellow-man, as well as receiving something from him.

Words like "self-discipline," "sacrifice," "Brotherhood," remind us at once of Christianity; and what I am going to try and show now is, not only that Fraternity may be *combined* with our religion, but that the whole essence of Christianity, on its practical side, *is* Fraternity; and that it is mainly due to Christianity that the idea of Fraternity has been preserved and has prospered in the world. Some will dispute this, and point to isolated texts or to

the selfish lives of many Christians, or to cases in which the principles of Christianity have been appealed to for the purpose of preserving unjust privileges or social inequalities. The question is not of "texts" on this side or that ; nor yet of the inconsistent lives which some Christians lead, or the false principles they take up. What we have to do is to look at Christianity broadly, as it is in its inmost core and meaning, and as it has appeared in history, and then ask—Does it or does it not mean Fraternity?

I. The central fact of Christianity—that on which the whole structure of it rests—is the Incarnation of the Son of God: the life of Jesus of Nazareth as the GOD-MAN upon earth. Now, this does not mean simply that He Who was both God and Man came once upon earth a long time ago, and passed away again ; just as if, for all practical purposes, He were a Man among other men and nothing more. It means, first, that He revealed Himself as the Perfect Man—the ideal Character, by imitating Whom all men may become what in their best moments they wish to be. And it means, again, that, being God as well as Man, He reconciled our human nature to the Divine nature ; so that those who trod in His footsteps and united themselves with His work might be sure of acceptance with God, of union with the Divine, through Him Who

"suffered for our salvation." Now, what I am concerned to do is, not to prove or explain these things—that will be done in other papers—but to show that the life and work of Christ, as we read it in the New Testament, *presupposes* the Fraternity, or Brotherhood, of all men. When Christ reconciled human nature to God, He implied that all who shared in that human nature were brethren, and of one family; wherefore St. Paul speaks of Him as our "Elder Brother." When He is presented to us as the "Pattern Man," it is implied that all men alike are imperfect, and that all alike are called to conform themselves to His image. If Christianity has not this message for all men, then it is untrue to the work which Christ did; for the work which Christ claimed to do, and which we Christians believe He did, has no meaning unless it was done by the Representative of all men on behalf of all men. Whether we believe the New Testament writers, or whether we do not, it is surely certain that they think of Christ's work as done for *all* human beings; that they think of men as joined in "one communion and fellowship" to God through Christ.

II. This is so plain, that when people tell us Christianity is opposed to Fraternity, we must suppose they mean, not Christianity as it is originally found in the New Testament but Chris-

tianity as it has been practically worked out among men. Let us, then, examine the attitude of Christianity towards three great matters of which we hear very much in this day, and which will always be important in civilized societies—Labour, Property, and Government.

(1) *Labour*. The large share which Christianity had in bringing about the abolition of slavery is admitted by all thinkers. Slavery is an institution so very far removed from our day and habits of thought, that we do not always realize the tremendous revolution which its disappearance from the world involved. But, in truth, the abolition of slavery meant an entire change in the way men thought of labour. As long as slaves were an institution, labour itself was held in contempt; it was something which no free man could handle and yet retain his self-respect. It meant giving up one's own free-will and becoming a machine in some one else's hands. Now, Christianity changed all that. It asserted that labour was an honourable thing, because it was the natural use of those gifts of strength or intelligence which our Heavenly Father has given us; and it pointed to the example of Him Who had worked in a carpenter's shop, and Who had chosen a few humble fishermen to be His Apostles for the conversion of the world. But it did more; it asserted that every

man, just because he was a member of the whole human family for which Christ died, had a worth of his own. Therefore no man had a right to use his fellow merely as a *means*—to the end that he himself might be made great or rich. Every man has a right to that freedom without which he cannot be a man at all—cannot serve his God as he would ; cannot develop his faculties or rise to the sense of responsibility within him. It was by repeating and insisting on these truths that Christianity abolished slavery, and it has been acting on the same lines ever since. The great body of Christian sentiment is as much opposed as ever to any legislation or institution which tends to make a machine of the labourer. It protests against his being treated as a mere wealth-producer for others. It insists on his receiving a due share of education, proper house accommodation, proper protection in his traditional holidays. In opposition to the pure trading spirit which would grind him into the dust beneath the wheels of competition, it insists that he shall be defended from his own weakness, and not betrayed into unjust contracts or plundered by unscrupulous middle-men. And this recognition of the dignity of labour and the rights of labourers springs from Christian ideas, and is an eternal part of them ; even those philanthropists who ignore Christianity owe their faith in progress and their

"enthusiasm for humanity" to the silent operation of the creed they profess to disbelieve.

(2) *Property*. Christianity, it is true, has never set itself against the institution of property, nor is it likely that it ever will. Christianity has always striven to recognize the rights of the individual as well as those of the society to which he belongs. It has agreed in that respect with the greatest teachers of the ancient and the modern world—with Aristotle as well as with John Stuart Mill. But it has always insisted on a view of property which is as far as possible removed from that which says a man may "do what he likes with his own." To the Christian, "property" is a *trust*; it is (like labour) a talent which he holds in fee for the good of his fellow-men. Aristotle said that the *possession* of property was private, but the *use* of it ought to be common. That is substantially the view of the Christian Church about the matter. The rich man is to share the *use* of his wealth with his poorer brethren; it is to be expended in view of the needs of the community, and not his own; it is something for the use of which God will judge him. It is the Christian view of property which inspires the saying, "Property has its duties as well as its rights." No doubt many Christians act in defiance of this view, and shirk their responsibilities; but no change in the constitution of States will put an

end to selfishness. What we all have to do is to press the Christian view, in season and out of season, and to insist that, as a Christian community, we ought to regulate the laws relating to property by this principle of "trust," and not by the interests of the propertied classes.

(3) *Government.* But the most serious charge brought against Christianity by believers in "Fraternity" is that it is on the side of the established political order, and uses its influence to hinder changes by which the idea of Fraternity might be realized more widely than it is. "Christianity," it is said, for instance, "defends the division of classes." Now, undoubtedly, Christianity usually is on the side of order and established government; but before we condemn it for that, we had better ask why this is so, and whether its attitude toward Government and the laws is inconsistent with what is meant by Fraternity. First, then, it is well to observe that Christianity is not bound up with one form of government more than another. It thrives equally well under Monarchies, Aristocracies, and Republics. When it appears to oppose a Republic, as in France at the present time, this is not so much because of the form of government, as because there the triumph of extreme Republicanism means the triumph of an anti-Christian party. On the other hand, all forms of Christian organization find

themselves equally able to support the Government of the United States of America. But though the particular form of government is thus a matter of secondary concern to Christianity, it is and has been resolute in maintaining the absolute necessity to human society of *some* form of government. There lies upon all men, it has taught ever since the days of St. Paul, the general obligation to obey the constituted authorities of a country. The grievances of individuals, and even of classes, must be borne with patience, if they cannot be remedied except by the violent destruction of the fabric of society. And in teaching these lessons the Christian Church has been against Revolution, but not against Fraternity. Fraternity itself demands a settled social order; it is not against "classes" as such, for we cannot do without classes; but what it aims at is that every class should do its own special work in a way that will benefit and strengthen the whole community. What it wants is, not to destroy the existing order of society, but to spread through all parts of it the spirit by which every man will think as naturally of his neighbour's wants as of his own. And thus we see why Christianity, out of which has come the whole doctrine of Fraternity, opposes Revolution, and why it so generally throws its weight on the side of established laws. It knows that the evil of the world comes,

not from without, but from within ; that under any imaginable form of human society there will still be pride and cruelty, carelessness and want, envy and inequality. It does not, nevertheless, *lug* the existing state of things and set itself doggedly against change ; if it did that, the charges of its worst enemies would be justified. What it does do is to resist *violent* changes, in the name of God and man alike ; and to call upon men, for the very sake of Brotherhood, to control their often just indignation, and their often natural impatience, in order that, by so doing, they may gradually remove out of the world some of the hindrances to good.

We see, then, that, however false some Christians may be to their creed, Christianity is so far from opposing Fraternity, that it assumes it as the one great fact in the life of men. But there is more than this to be said. Christianity itself provides an organization in which the idea of Fraternity can be realized far more really than it is in any scheme of any reformer, however philanthropic. We are so accustomed, in these modern days, to the sight of the Christian system as a multitude of jarring sects, that we have well-nigh forgotten the grand ideal with which the Church started of a Brotherhood, to which all mankind should belong. Yet that ideal is still attractive to us, and the revival of it as an actual living force, within our

own Church of England, is daily becoming more and more a fact. The whole idea of a Church—a society of which Christ is the Head and we the members—rests on the recognition of the Brotherhood of man; and if we can make all the motives of our actions—all our inward and spiritual life—turn upon the continual remembrance that, as brethren, linked all together by our relationship to Christ, we owe duties to one another,—then, as the Church more and more extends her influence over the souls of men, she will become in truth the regenerator of humanity.

To sum it all up, we best promote the interests of Fraternity when we throw the whole vigour of our wills into the effort to lead a Christian life. For, as was said earlier on, Fraternity demands sacrifice and self-discipline from the individual: his family, his township, his country, have claims upon him throughout his life; and he cannot live for his brethren till he has first subdued himself. But “to subdue self,” to conquer personal pride and class prejudice, is the very object set before us by the Christian religion; which bids us humble ourselves, just as Christ humbled Himself, “to death, even the death of the Cross.” And when we have thus, to some extent, at least, purified ourselves; when, through the power of Christ, we have overcome old temptations and are beginning to

lead a "godly, righteous, and sober life;"—then the same religion reminds us of our duties to our neighbour, and calls upon us to fulfil the idea of Fraternity. What we learn to do as members of the Church is just to give to others of our superabundance, and again to receive from them what is lacking to ourselves. One has wealth, another intelligence, another bodily strength, another the gift of patience, another of energy, another of spiritual insight. Not in setting up ourselves and our own gift, not in starting new sects on our own account, but in the free sharing and interchanging of all such gifts and graces with one another, it is that we learn to live the common life, and to act as brethren one of another. Thus it is by living a full and real life as Christians and as Churchmen that we shall find the spirit of Fraternity grow strong within us; it is when the idea of human Brotherhood has come to dominate our inner life that we shall be able to organize our outer life also according to the principle of love.

What has Christianity done for England ?

PAYMENT by results is the test usually applied to the work of men and of institutions at the present time. The credit as well as the reward of a man depends upon what he has done. The race of life is too quick, the competition too keen, to allow us to pause and think of the failures which strew the path. We have only time to concern ourselves with those who succeed, be they artisans, or statesmen, or lawyers, or clergy, and we ask breathlessly of each as he comes into the range of our vision, What has he done? The same test is applied even more rigorously to institutions. No matter how venerable, how interesting, how much bound up with the life of the nation an institution has been, it has still to answer the same practical question before we will support it. Of what good is it? What has it done?

Let us apply this test to Christianity in England. Let us try and see what parts of our national well-being are due to the national religion ; what it has

brought to us which would be acknowledged by all Englishmen, irrespective of creed or party, to have been of great national advantage. We will put Christianity on its trial in this respect, apply to it the test of payment by results, and ask, What has it done for England? Then, when we have answered this question, however slight and inadequate may be the answer, we may perhaps have got together some little pieces of evidence, on one very small part of the subject, which may help us to decide for ourselves the great question of our day—Is Christianity worth living for and worth dying for? We are going to see, therefore, what Christianity may do for ourselves individually by seeing what it has done for the nation collectively.

Christianity made England a Nation.

Before the Church was planted in England—for the Church was the only form of Christianity known in England for a thousand years—England was split up into a number of little tribal states, which made war upon each other, and had no idea at all of uniting themselves into a nation. It was the unity of the Church that pointed the way to the unity of the nation. When Northumbrians and West Saxons and East Anglians found themselves all members of the same Church, they began to wish to be all members of the same nation, and so,

under the influence of Christianity, England became a nation. It will be sufficient to quote the words of Dr. Stubbs, England's greatest living historian, on this point: "The Church of England is not only the agency by which Christianity is brought to a heathen people, a herald of spiritual blessings and glorious hopes in another life. It is not merely the tamer of cruel natures, the civilizer of the rude, the cultivator of the waste places, the educator, the guide, and the protector, whose guardianship is the only safeguard of the woman, the child, and the slave against the tyranny of their lord and master. The Church is this in many other countries besides Britain; but here it is more. The unity of the Church in England was the pattern of the unity of the State; the cohesion of the Church was for ages the substitute for the cohesion which the divided nation was unable otherwise to realize. It was to an extraordinary degree a national Church; national in its comprehensiveness as well as in its exclusiveness. Englishmen were in their lay aspect Mercians or West Saxons; only in their ecclesiastical relations could they feel themselves fellow-countrymen and fellow-subjects. . . . The unity of the Church was in the early period the only working unity; and its liberty in the evil days which followed the only form in which the traditions of the ancient freedom lingered." ¹

¹ Stubbs, "Constitutional History," i. p. 224.

Christianity made England Free.

Next to unity and civilization, freedom is the greatest blessing a nation can enjoy. That England enjoys it as thoroughly as she does, is largely due to the Church. At the great crises in English history, when the freedom of Englishmen was trembling in the balance, it was the Church which, by throwing her weight into the scale of liberty, decided the question. It was the Church which, in close alliance with the wise Alfred, assisted him to give to the united nation good government and equal laws. It was the Church which, under the leadership of Archbishops Anselm and Becket, put the first effectual limitation on the all-absorbing tyranny of the Norman kings. It was the Church that, under Archbishop Stephen Langton, won the Great Charter of English liberty from the false and rapacious John.¹ It was the Church which was the staunchest supporter of Simon de Montfort in his attempt to obtain the recognition of the Charter from the weak Henry III., and gave her sanction to the calling of the first English Parliament. The Church was the greatest bulwark of the only dynasty in England, before the present one, which honestly endeavoured to rule in a constitutional

¹ See Oxford House Papers, No. 6, "Magna Carta—The Church and English Freedom."

manner, namely the House of Lancaster. When Henry VIII. set about the creation in England of a system of arbitrary government dependent merely on the will of the sovereign, in imitation of the great despotic monarchies of Spain and France, the Church was the first enemy with whom he had to deal. The Tudor tyranny was not securely established or fully developed until the Church had been humbled, and firmly attached to the royal chariot-wheels. It is true that during the reigns of the first three Stuarts the Church is seen apparently turning her back upon her old policy, and allying herself with the cause of despotism. She had been so closely dominated by the royal power under the Tudors, that it took some time for her to recover her independence of action ; but when the crisis of the struggle came, when James II. was clearly seen to be bent upon overthrowing the constitutional liberty of Englishmen, the Church awoke, burst her chains, and, under the leadership of the seven Bishops, guided the nation along the path of the Revolution, and secured its freedom by the overthrow of the tyrant.¹

The influence of Christianity has been no less strong in favour of the private liberty of individuals

¹ For the attitude of Christianity towards more modern developments of the idea of freedom, see Oxford House Papers, No. 7, "Fraternity."

than it has been in favour of the constitutional liberty of the nation. In early times the institution of slavery was in full vigour in England, as it was amongst most Teutonic nations before they accepted Christianity. Here, as among these other nations, it was the Church that put an end to it as an institution, and succeeded, after some difficulty, in putting a stop to the slave-trade with Ireland, which was then the principal source of supply. The system of villeinage, by which men were forbidden to leave the district in which they were born, and had to work without wages in return merely for their maintenance, was a sort of half-slavery which lingered on for many years. Here again the Church exerted her influence on behalf of liberty. Though she did not destroy the institution altogether, she did her best to weaken it by providing a number of ways in which villeins could be emancipated, and urging the adoption of them by all means in her power upon their masters. In later times, it was undoubtedly the spirit of Christianity which prompted Wilberforce and his friends to carry further the policy of Anselm and the mediæval Church. By inducing Parliament to abolish slavery as an institution in all British colonies and dependencies, and rigorously to put down the slave-trade, as far as possible, all over the world, they succeeded in vindicating the historical position of Christian

England as the champion of individual as well as of national liberty.

Christianity gave England the Bible.

The influence which the Bible has had and is having upon the lives and thoughts of Englishmen is incalculable. In no country of the world has it been more read and valued. Its phrases have passed insensibly into daily conversation. It is acknowledged to be the purest "well of English undefiled." It comprised for hundreds of years almost the sole literature of the country; it is even now the only part of English literature that is universally circulated and universally read. It has thus done much to form our language, to inspire our thoughts, and to guide our actions, as a nation. Once or twice in our history it has had much to do with bringing about great national movements. The Puritan assertion of individual liberty and individual holiness in the seventeenth century, the Puritan spirit which founded the New England colonies and formed the backbone of the opposition to Charles I., identified itself with and expressed itself by the Old Testament history of the Chosen People battling to the death with their enemies for the Promised Land. The mission spirit of the eighteenth century revival, which is so characteristic of the religious movements of Wesley and

Whitefield, of Wilberforce and of Hannah More, took its direct inspiration from the life of Christ and His Apostles as told in the New Testament.

But the Bible is not only the history of the children of Israel, and the record of the pattern life of Christ; it is the storehouse of the simplest and the highest morality that the world has ever seen. Whatever may be said against Christianity as an organized religious system, it is hardly a matter of serious dispute that the moral teaching put forth by our Lord at the beginning of His life in the Sermon on the Mount, and declared by Him to be of the very essence of Christianity, was the highest moral teaching that had ever been put before men, higher far than the severest teaching of Buddha or of Plato.¹ That teaching, preserved for us in the Bible, has been spread all over the world by Christianity wherever it has gone, and has slowly permeated and sunk into the minds of thinking men, has affected their moral standard, has implanted in their moral consciousness a conception of right and wrong altogether different from that which obtains among nations which have remained under the influence of heathen morality. Since the Christian era even non-Christian writers have owed to Christian

¹ On the morality of Christ's teaching, see Oxford House Papers, No. 12, "Christ and Morality."

morality the most valuable part of their moral teaching. In giving to England the Bible, Christianity has endowed her with a great literary treasure which has educated the mind of her children, and a great moral power which has trained the affection, deepened the earnestness, and disciplined the zeal of the national character.

Christianity has vindicated the Dignity of Womanhood and the Purity of Home Life.

Woman owes her true position in society to Christianity. Among the great nations of the East, according to the great religions of the world which preceded Christianity, she was little better than the plaything and the slave of man. But when it was announced that God had chosen to effect the redemption of the world through the instrumentality of woman, that woman had been permitted to become the mother of God, the position of woman was at once altered. She became "saved through child-bearing." It was she who had given to the world spiritual freedom and spiritual power through that very capacity of child-bearing which had hitherto made her the slave and the instrument. From this, as Christianity made its way in the world, proceeded a totally different conception of the true relations between man and woman. No longer the slave to be bought with

money, she is the equal to be won by love. Religion calls forth the chivalry, the generosity, and the loyalty of man's nature. He becomes the protector, not the master, of weakness, the partner of a mutual obedience of love. There are no virtues more eminently Christian, or, as we fondly boast, more eminently English, than domestic love, manly chivalry, and womanly trust. There is no nation so jealous of the sanctity of home life, and so proud of its domestic virtues, as the English.

*Christianity has given England the Spirit of
Philanthropy.*

"Ye shall love your neighbour as yourself," was the second great command of Christ. The first commandment, the love of God, was to show itself in the love of man. The equality of men before Christ and the fraternity of men in Christ were to be proved by the love of man for man for the sake of Christ. There is no Christian duty which is more strongly insisted upon in the New Testament; there is none which the Church has tried more zealously to fulfil. In the Middle Ages each trade in each town had its guild, which supported its members in sickness and old age, and buried them when they died. Each monastery had its hospital and its dispensary for the sick, and gave freely of its charity to the necessitous. Scattered over the

country were almshouses, or "hospitals," as they were usually called, founded by Christian men and women for the reception and maintenance of the aged and infirm poor. Outside the gates of all important towns stood the lazaret-house, where those suffering from infectious diseases and leprosy were housed and cared for. Much that is now done by the Government out of the taxes for the relief of the poor and the care of the sick, was in mediæval England done by the Church out of the alms given for the purpose for the love of Christ. It was Christianity that taught men the duty of philanthropic almsgiving. It was Christianity that taught governments the duty of relieving the destitute and ministering to the afflicted. In our own day the tide of Christian charity still flows. Most of the many philanthropic institutions which do so much to relieve the selfishness of the age—hospitals for the sick, orphanages for the homeless, asylums for the distressed, homes for the fallen—owe their foundation to the love of man taught by Christianity. It is impossible to go through a street in the older part of London without seeing written up on one at least of the houses, "Supported by voluntary contributions." Those words in nearly every instance denote the existence of an institution founded to minister in some form or other to the wants of the poor by men who are seeking to

carry into practical effect the command of Christ, "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you ;" and are maintained by those who realize the truth of the saying of Christ, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And even in the case of those institutions which are avowedly unsectarian or un-Christian, the spirit which prompted their foundation is the spirit of Christianity, though the men who founded them or maintain them may have ceased to acknowledge it. It was Christianity that first brought into the world the doctrine of the responsibility of man for his fellow-man, of the duty of the rich to give of their substance unto the poor, of the duty of all to assist the needs of their brothers in Christ ; and if those who are not Christians now recognize and accept these responsibilities, it is because Christianity has shown them the way. Philanthropy has become part of the morality of the world, because it is part of the religion of Christ. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Christianity has given England Education.

All men now acknowledge the advantages of education. They see that it helps a man to get on in the world : it has a money value. Christianity saw its importance a long time before most men

saw it, and has from the first tried to bring education within the reach of all, not because of its money value, but because of its moral value, because it made men better citizens, better men, and better Christians. Up to a very few years ago so completely did men realize that education was the work of Christianity, that there were hardly any places of education in the country which had not been founded, and were not being maintained, by Christian benevolence. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the great public schools of Eton, Winchester, etc., most of the country grammar schools, all the parish elementary schools, were founded, endowed, built, and maintained by Christian money, out of Christian zeal, for Christian purposes. Christianity had given England a great system of education, from the highest to the lowest. It was so from the very first. Directly England became Christian, schools were founded, and the extension of a system of Christian education has gone on side by side with the extension of Christianity all over the world. It is true that at the present day education in England is not exclusively Christian, that is to say, that those who are not Christians are allowed to share in the advantages and the privileges of our great educational establishments, still none the less is the system in its origin and history Christian. They are but getting

the advantage of what Christianity has done for the nation. Christianity has given England a national system of education, and all members of the nation, whether Christians or not, have the advantages of it.

Christianity has given England Civilization.

The essence of civilization consists in the power of man to combine with man for their mutual good, and the more perfect the sense of responsibility is in man for the good of his fellow-man the more perfect will be the civilization. All the appliances of civilization—the elaborate machinery of government, the administration of justice, the development of trade, the perfecting of means of communication—all spring from the principle of combination. Men seek a centre of unity round which to combine for their mutual welfare. They find it first in the family, then in the tribe, the kingdom, the nation, the race, and, as the power of combination thus increases, so do the appliances of civilization. Men find it necessary to choose a form of government, to make laws, to exchange their products one with another, to find means to move those products as quickly as possible to the best market. So trade develops, wealth increases, the standard of comfort rises, civilization is achieved. But it is then really but a half-civilization. If these appliances, if these

riches, are used simply for the selfish purposes of those in whose hands they lie ; if government is used for the advantage of the governors, not of the governed ; if justice is administered to secure the privilege of some, and not the rights of all ; if trade is directed for the benefit of one class or one interest, or one country, at the expense of the rest of the community ;—then civilization becomes a curse rather than a blessing. It carries with it the seeds of its own decay. It brings about its own fall. Such was to a large extent the cause of the failure of the pre-Christian civilizations, of the great powers of Egypt and of Persia, of Greece and of Rome. Such is to a large extent the explanation of the failure of the great Mohammedan civilization. To us civilization means far more than this. It does not merely mean the results which man gains by combining with his fellow-man for the purpose of gaining wealth and defending it when gained ; it means also the duty of using it for the welfare of the whole community. It involves responsibility. "To us," says Dean Church, "civilization means liberty and the power of bearing and using liberty ; it means that which ensures to us a peaceful life—a life of our own, fenced in from wrong, and with our path and ends left free to us ; it means the strength of social countenance given on the whole to those virtues

which make life nobler and easier ; it means growing honour for manliness, unselfishness, sincerity—growing value for gentleness, considerateness, and respect for others ; it means readiness to bear criticism, to listen to correction, to see and amend our mistakes ; it means the willingness, the passion to ameliorate conditions, to communicate advantages, to raise the weak and low, to open wide gates and paths for them to that discipline of cultivation and improvement which has produced such fruit in others more fortunate than they.”¹ That it means this is largely the result of Christianity. Christianity has done much to mould and form the national character ; and the national civilization is profoundly affected by the national character. The warmth of affection so deeply shown in the English love of home ; the love of truth characteristically displayed in the Englishman’s hatred of a sham ; his sense of justice in the proverbial love of fair play ; his moral courage which, far more than mere physical courage, is the secret of the boast that the English never know when they are beaten ; his sense of duty so heroically shown in the rule of the sea that the weakest are first to be saved, and the captain the last to leave his sinking ship ; his self-control ; his capacity for work ;—these are some of the virtues which are

¹ Church, “Gifts of Civilization,” p. 20.

especially English and especially Christian ; virtues with which Christianity has endowed the English character, and which have done much to develop the civilization of which we boast.

In saying that Christianity has given England nationality, freedom, and civilization, it is not meant that, if England had not become Christian, she would never have become a free nation, and would have been wanting in virtues which are common to many nations. It is the function of religion rather to consecrate and develop national capacities than to create them, and it is enough for our purpose if we can trace her guiding hand clearly and unmistakably in the course of England's progress to greater national blessings and more perfected national character. It is not so much that to Christianity alone is to be attributed this development of what is best in the national life, as that without Christianity that development would never have taken place. The Christian religion supplied the incentive, and has guided the course of the national progress. "The lesson of history," says Dean Church, "I think is this: *not* that all the good which might have been hoped for to society has followed from the appearance of the Christian religion in the forefront of human life; *not* that in this wilful and blundering world, so full of misused gifts and wasted opportunities and dis-

appointed promises, mistake and mischief have never been in its train; *not* that in the nations where it has gained a footing it has mastered their besetting sins, the falsehood of one, the ferocity of another, the characteristic sensuality, the characteristic arrogance of others. But history teaches us this: that in tracing back the course of human improvement we come, in one case after another, upon Christianity as the source from which improvement derived its principle and its motive; we find no other source adequate to account for this new spring of amendment; and, without it, no other sources of good could have been relied upon. It was not only the strongest element of salutary changes, but one without which others would have had no chance. And in the next place, the least and most imperfect instance of what it has done has this unique quality—that Christianity carries within it a self-correcting power ready to act wherever the will arrives to use the power, that it suggests improvement and furnishes materials for a further step to it. What it has done *anywhere*, what it has done where it has done most, leaves much to do; but *everywhere* it leaves the ground gained on which to do it, and the ideas to guide the reformer in doing it. We should be cowards to think that those mighty and beneficent powers which won the ground for us, and produced these ideas in dark

and very unhappy times, cannot in our happier days accomplish even more. . . . But in our eagerness for improvement, it concerns us to be on our guard against the temptation of thinking that we can have the fruit on the flower and yet destroy the root; that we may retain the high view of human nature which has grown up with the growth of Christian nations, and discard that revelation of Divine love and human destiny of which that view forms a part or a consequence; that we may retain the moral energy and yet make light of the faith which produced it."¹

Christianity, then, comes into the world, not as a conqueror, but as a reformer. It does not compel men to obey its precepts; it rather seeks to win them to its will. It persuades, it entreats, it influences, it enjoins—it does not compel. It is the leaven which works gradually in the mass, the field in which are tares as well as wheat, the seed which depends upon the nature of the ground upon which it falls for its productiveness. We expect, therefore, that the history of human institutions, even when powerfully affected by Christianity, will be a checkered history; that the motives of men, even when good Christians, will be mixed; that there will be much of self-seeking, much of pride, much of jealousy, even in those actions of Christian nations

¹ Church, "Gifts of Civilization," pp. 341-344.

and Christian men which are most distinctly due to the promptings of religion. We admit that in the great struggle for freedom the actions of the ecclesiastical statesmen throughout were largely affected by jealousy for their own position, and in later times by the rivalry of England and Rome. We acknowledge that, though the Church preached the wickedness of slavery, monasteries retained the system of villeinage longer than anybody else, and the Bishops voted against the Abolition Bill. We allow that Christian nations and Christian men have incurred, often in the name of Christianity itself, the guilt of barbarous cruelty, such as that of Philip II. in the Low Countries, and Louis XIV. in the south of France; and of deliberate selfishness, such as that which has marked the government of Ireland by England down almost to the present day. We grant that even where Christianity has had complete control from first to last of institutions with which she has endowed the world—such, for instance, as the great educational institutions in this country—she has greatly failed in her duty with regard to them. We admit all this to the full; but we say that these wrongs and these failures are so far from being due to Christianity that they are in direct contradiction to its teaching. They are not only national crimes, but national sins. They occurred, not because men were Chris-

tians, but because they were not Christian enough. The history of the Christian world is the history of a gradual progress, the gradual working of the leaven which eventually is to leaven the whole lump; but it is the history of a progress which, though gradual, is continuous and permanent. In Christianity we see the motive power without which this progress would be impossible. In the history of nations influenced by Christianity, in the history of institutions exclusively or in part Christian, we find the records of crimes and wickedness and miserable failures, just as in the life of the individual Christian, however near to perfection he may seem to have attained, will be found, according to the teaching of Christianity, imperfection and sin; yet amid all the confusion, and in spite of all the apparent failures, is seen in the history of the civilized world the power of Christianity moulding, directing, forming, helping wherever men are found receptive of its teaching, and willing to follow its guidance. To it are due, in spite of the imperfection of the instruments through which it acts, most of the blessings we enjoy as a civilized nation, and which will be found to be of permanent value to us only so far as they correspond to the spirit of the teaching of Christ.

Magna Carta—The Church and English Freedom.

I. IT is often the fashion to speak of the Church as the enemy of liberty and the opponent of progress. Again and again it is implied, if not openly asserted, that the Church has played no important part in English history, has never successfully fought for the right against the wrong, has never aided the nation to secure its slowly won, and at times hard-won, liberties.

We propose to test these views by reference to an epoch in our history connected in all men's minds with the name of Freedom—the time of the Great Charter, or Magna Carta, as it is usually called. The grant of Magna Carta by King John is an event of very real importance in the history of England. The principles of English liberty were for the first time very plainly set forth ; the English people for the first time clearly comprehended the possibility of making a successful resistance against

tyranny; for the first time in English history, nobles, clergy, and people were brought together, and the unity of the nation became an accomplished fact.

II. Ten years of misrule preceded the grant of Magna Carta. No European nation at the present day would endure such misrule for ten weeks, probably not for ten days.

England, however, in the reign of John was very different from the England of our own day. It requires an effort to picture to ourselves an England with no Parliament, with no organized system of government such as now exists. It requires a still greater effort to realize the difficulties in the way of discovering the opinion of the country on any matter of moment. "In modern times public opinion . . . lives and works in the daily press." But in the thirteenth century the press was undreamt of. Besides London, Norwich, and Winchester, there were few towns of any great importance; Liverpool and Manchester were places of no weight, Birmingham a small country town. We can gain some notion of the condition of the great commercial highways when we remember that Chaucer's pilgrims took three days and a half for the journey from London to Canterbury, a distance of less than sixty miles. From a consideration of the well-nigh impossibility of gaining a clear idea

of the state of public opinion, one can comprehend how many and great were the obstacles to organizing an opposition to an evil and powerful ruler.

What were, then, the principal elements composing the nation at the time of John's accession? and why was a combination of these elements hard to bring about?

Royalty had reached a very high pitch. The power of the king had during the previous fifty years enormously increased, and no checks to that power had been provided. So long as there were kings who acted on behalf of the people, enabling them to secure justice and to live at home in security, the royal power was deservedly popular. The nobles had as yet never gained the confidence of the people. They had pursued a selfish policy, seeking their own ends at the expense of the Church and poorer classes. The Church and people, both equally opposed to the feudal baronage from whom they met with no sympathy, had found their only safeguard in supporting the royal power.

But when in John a king arose determined to use his immense opportunities for the oppression of all classes—nobles, clergy, people; when "John stood face to face with his people, an unmitigated tyrant—a sovereign whose power no constitutional limits as yet restricted, and whom no scruples, no

counsel held back in the exercise, the abusive exercise of it,"—then it became absolutely necessary for all orders to combine together against him.

Fortunately, a new class of nobles had since the beginning of the previous century been gradually growing up—a class which, taking the place of the old feudal baronage, followed a new policy, and were ready to oppose the violent acts of a tyrant. By the end of John's reign this class had to some extent secured the confidence of the nation, a confidence confirmed in the reigns of John's son and grandson.

The difficulties, however, in forming a regular combination were enormous. Classes were still so divided, so unaccustomed to union, that if no links had been found to join nobles, Church, and people together, it seems certain that Magna Carta would never have been gained.

In 1205, the sixth year of his reign, John had lost Normandy, a loss which most distinctly proved a benefit to England; for, no longer able "to look on Normandy as their natural home," our kings, beginning with John, henceforward "found themselves obliged to live face to face with their people."

In the same year, his wise minister, Hubert Walter, died, from whose death we date the real commencement of those ten years of misrule which gave England her Great Charter.

The question of the appointment of a successor to Hubert Walter as Archbishop of Canterbury involved John in a contest with Innocent III., one of the greatest of Popes.

Eventually—and most fortunately for England—Innocent chose Stephen Langton, an Englishman resident at Rome, to be Archbishop. For six years, till 1213, John and Innocent struggled and the people of England suffered. With no care for his subjects, John's one desire was to enrich himself. It was well for the nobles, as yet with no leader,—it was well for the masses, as yet unable to make themselves heard,—that among the clergy were found men who were not afraid to take up an antagonistic attitude to John. For on the clergy as a class fell the weight of the king's hand, and their resistance to his illegal demands for money only increased the growing breach between the clergy and the royal power. During this contest John was excommunicated, and finally declared deposed, by the Pope. At length his superstitious fears got the better of his obstinacy, and John submitted in the most abject manner.

The importance of this contest lies in the fact that the Church, while securing Stephen Langton as Archbishop, was thrown into opposition to the Crown.

The first note of resistance to John's tyranny had

been struck ; but it required two more years before the union of nobles, clergy, and people wrung Magna Carta from John, in 1215.

These two years are worthy of our closest attention. In May, 1213, John's submission to the Pope was made, John consenting to hold England and Ireland as fiefs of Rome, and to pay tribute to the Pope. To crush the liberties of his people, John handed over England to the Pope, and secured Innocent as his ally. The firm attitude of Langton saved England from the immediate effects of this scandalous alliance. In July, 1213, John met Langton at Winchester, and there, at the Archbishop's bidding, promised to observe good laws and even-handed justice.

No reliance could be placed on his word, and at two meetings held in August, 1213, "the three Estates learned much of each other's desires," and a programme of political action was indicated by the Archbishop.

The first of these meetings was held at St. Alban's, August 4th, and was attended by representatives of the people. Common grievances were, no doubt, discussed. On August 25th, the memorable council was held at St. Paul's, where the Archbishop produced a copy of the Charter of Henry I., which not only confirmed the popular old English laws, but abolished such

grievances as arbitrary taxation and oppressive fines. Before the arrival of Langton in England, the nobles, though suffering from, and fiercely hating the tyranny of John, had been unable to combine against him.

The reading of this Charter by Langton was received with great applause, and the Archbishop then proposed that it should be used as a programme of the reforms to be demanded from the king. The nation had thus, owing to the statesmanlike action of Langton, secured its programme.

Nearly two years elapsed before this Charter of Henry I. became the basis of Magna Carta. In the mean time, John, being at war with France, went abroad, hoping, by a brilliant victory, to divert men's minds from troubles at home.

Fortunately for us, he was defeated at the great battle of Bouvines, July 27, 1214, and nothing was left for him but to hurry home to try and crush the nobles, who were now resolved to imitate the patriotic conduct of the Church, and to make "tyranny for ever impossible" in England.

Seeing a crisis was at hand, the nobles, with "something definite for which to struggle," held a meeting in November, 1214, at Bury St. Edmunds, where they swore to demand the observance of the Charter of Henry I., and the laws of Edward the Confessor. Finding the nobles prepared to resist

him, John cunningly tried to detach the clergy from the national cause by a tempting bribe. To their honour, the clergy refused to separate their cause from that of the rest of the nation.

The barons then demanded John's performance of the oath made to Langton, at Winchester, 1213, and of the Confirmation of the Charter of Henry I.

For six months John evaded compliance. It was not till the united barons in arms, supported by the clergy, and London, and acting in sympathy with the whole nation, assumed a determined attitude, that John agreed to sign Magna Carta, on June 15, 1215.

"The Great Charter," says our most learned historian, "is the act of the united nation, the Church, the Barons, and the Commons, for the first time thoroughly at one." By it protection is given to all classes. By it the rights of the Church are secured. By it every Englishman's right to withstand oppression is recognized, and illegal taxation is abolished. It is evident the cause of Church and State was the same. It is equally clear that all classes benefited by the grant of Magna Carta.

III. The object of this paper is not, however, to discuss the benefits of Magna Carta, but rather to notice the manner in which it was gained. The nobles, for the first time since the Norman Conquest, had acted with Church and people, had acted as

Englishmen, and much credit is due to them. It is to the Church, however, that we must look for the most consistent opposition to John's tyrannical rule. It was Stephen Langton who formed the link which united the Church with the nobles. This effective resistance of the Church was in a great measure caused by her previous relations with the nation. As far back as the seventh century the Church had begun her civilizing work in England. She had in those early years shown men the advantages of unity; she had introduced learning and culture; she had aided the kings in making and carrying out the laws.

After the Norman Conquest the influence of the Church increased. The Norman and Angevin kings found in the prelates and learned men of the Church able ministers. With the aid of the Church, the kings and people withstood the attempts of the nobles to establish in England a reign of anarchy. Lanfranc, Roger of Salisbury, Hubert Walter, were all Churchmen, who did good work in furthering either national unity or constitutional freedom. Throughout the ages preceding *Magna Carta* the watchwords of the Church had been Religion and Liberty. In aiding the kings and people against the nobles, the Church had been no blind supporter of the royal power. Over and over again Churchmen, like Anselm, and Becket, and

Hugh of Lincoln, had boldly opposed what they held to be acts of injustice on the part of such powerful monarchs as Henry I., Henry II., and Richard I., and in so doing had shown the nation "the existence of a limit on royal irresponsibility."

A second cause of the effective action of the Church is to be found in its position as a spiritual power. The Norman Conquest had brought the English Church into close relations with the Papacy. Though the supremacy claimed by the Popes, both in spiritual as well as temporal matters, introduced with it abuses which in the end led to the overthrow of that supremacy in England, the Church was enabled, time after time during the two hundred years following the Norman Conquest, to use her claim to supremacy in spiritual matters for the assumption of an attitude of independence towards English kings. This independence as a spiritual power had gained for the Church, as represented by Anselm and Becket, victories over the royal power. It was her claim to a Divine origin, combined with her intellectual pre-eminence, and her valuable labours, as seen in the administration of her statesmen-bishops, and in the more humble but no less useful work of the monasteries and lower clergy, which made men recognize that the power of the Church was some-

thing very different from the power of king or noble.

IV. With the recollection, still living in men's minds, of her past services to the nation, and encouraged by her own keen appreciation of the peculiar strength of her position as a spiritual power, the Church continued through the reign of John her advocacy of the liberties of the nation.

Till 1205, John was checked by the firm hand of Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1207, Archbishop Geoffrey of York preferred rather to suffer exile than to pay an illegal tax. In 1213, Stephen Langton's first act on entering England was boldly to compel John to promise good government, and, in the same year, by placing something definite before the barons, in the Charter of Henry I., he showed them how to form a combination against tyranny. "It was as the adviser of these great men, the leader of the barons of England, that Stephen Langton became the author of *Magna Carta*."

Never before and never since has the Church of England "come forward more distinctly as the champion of religion and liberty than when she taught the Barons to wrest the Great Charter from John."

The principal agent in bringing about the union of the three Estates against John, and in teaching

the nation not only how to defeat the king, but also to secure its liberties for the future, was the Church. Without the aid of the Church the nation would not have secured a charter of liberties like our Great Charter. To the Church, then, England is indebted for the Great Charter; and this debt is rarely recognized. It is forgotten how ignorant, selfish, and factious a large majority of the barons were. It is forgotten how helpless, how dependent on leaders, the people were. It is forgotten how the Church was the only body capable of taking the lead in a great national crisis, and how in the hour of danger she was not found wanting.

The wise statesmanlike conduct of Stephen Langton should win our admiration, quite as much as the courage and calmness with which he confronted king and Pope at the same time. "The maintenance of the Charter becomes from henceforth the watchword of English freedom," and the grant of that Charter was largely due to the wise and patriotic action of Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury.

THE following books may be consulted on the subject of this paper:—

Memorials of Walter of Coventry, vol. ii.; Introduction by Dr. Stubbs. 10s.

Constitutional History of England, vol. i., by
Dr. Stubbs. 12s.

The Early Plantagenets, by Dr. Stubbs. 2s. 6d.

Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury, vol. ii.,
by Hook. 15s.

History of England in the Early and Middle
Ages, by C. H. Pearson. Two Vols. 30s.

History of Religion in England, by H. O. Wake-
man. 1s. 6d.

The National Church of a Democratic State.

WHAT has a Democratic State to do with a "National" Church? What is a Democratic State? It is essentially an associated body, every individual of which is free to express his opinion of, or desire for, any particular political action, and the motive power of which is the common consent of all the individuals if possible, or of the majority if otherwise. So long as these essentials are secured, the actual form of the government is of secondary importance. No democratic majority therefore, can impose *opinions* on individuals or minorities, for by such action a majority cuts away that which is the sole justification for its authority, viz. freedom of expression for all.

What is a Church? Broadly speaking, it is a community bound together by a common religious (*i.e.* binding) belief. But this religious belief, whether derived from inspiration, reason, or that combination of both, Faith, is a matter for the private conscience, for individual apprehension; in

a word, it is a matter of private opinion. Thus no democratic government can justifiably impose opinions by making them into tests for civil qualifications, nor by compelling any one to belong to any particular religious community.

What, then, has a Democratic State to do with such a community as a Church? This. No State, least of all a democratic one, can exist by force alone. Force is only the final resource of a State in dealing with foreign enemies or unwilling members. A State lives healthfully only by the consent of its willing members, which consent is obtained, not by the sense of the force at the back of a government, but by the justice of its rule and of the laws which it maintains. Citizens, then, must ever seek to maintain this ideal of justice in their laws and in their administrators. They must ever be reminded of it, and in youth must be trained to a sense of it. This justice once being secured to the State, other virtues are demanded from its citizens—self-sacrifice, obedience, social charity, purity, etc. "The theory of Democracy," says Grote, "was to the Athenians pre-eminently attractive; creating in the minds of the citizens an intense positive attachment, and disposing them to voluntary action and suffering on its behalf, such as no coercion on the part of other governments could extort. . . . For a certain measure,

not only of positive political attachment, but also of active self-devotion, military readiness, and personal effort was the indispensable condition of maintaining Greek autonomy." The moral sanction of justice is necessary to the State's authority, and this alone calls forth the virtuous activity of its members. In a word, a State lives and prospers, not by wealth alone or force alone, but by morality.

Without discussing the very large question as to whether morality depends upon some form of supernatural belief or not, it is plain that were all the adult members of a State agreed upon a particular code of morals and upon the sanction necessary to make such binding upon the conscience, there would be no question of Church or State. For the State would combine both terms, being in its moral aspect a religious community, and in its civil aspect a social community. A special body of men would be encouraged to train themselves as expounders of such a code, to remind citizens of their duty to be virtuous, authorities of their duty to be just, and youth of its duty to admire this justice and to practise virtue. Again, since the provision for such a class of men could not be left to chance support, the State would see that they were provided for by encouraging citizens to be generous, and by protecting such generosity from misuse. But this is to "establish

and endow " a Church, by providing for its teachers a livelihood, and for its congregations—in this supposed case the whole community—means of religious training and worship. Were we all agreed, therefore, on a code of religious (*i.e.* binding) morality, it would be the most natural course to establish and endow the men or institution capable of maintaining such in a state of vitality. It is our difference of opinion, then, on such matters that brings about the difficulty, and not anything inherently wrong in the "establishment" under State recognition of a religious institution for propagating morality. In early days some such agreement was brought about. There was held to be only one form of morality; that of Christianity, and only one body capable of teaching it, the Church. Afterwards, when the Church assumed the form of an ecclesiastical institution, with separate courts and private property, contests arose between its representatives and the State courts; but as a religious institution, with a particular form of worship, it was never looked upon as anything separate from the State, since its form of worship and discipline was, up to the Reformation, the sole form of "Church" known to the community.

Under such circumstances of agreement in the main as to what the Church was, and when all, as a rule, belonged to it, the question of Church and

State as separate institutions had little meaning. Nor did Henry VIII. or the Reformers have a clear conception of any other than the one Church. They merely insisted that that part of it coextensive with the English nation should obey English laws, and not appeal to foreign popes for legal support external to the national courts. Particular Reformers may have sought to engraft upon the Church particular doctrines, but there was no idea of several competing Churches, one of which secured royal favour and the rest were ousted. Only after the Restoration do we find the Nonconformists grouping themselves into separate "Churches," and not until the last century has the idea of religious institutions competing for public favour come into play. Indeed, until Nonconformist and Romanist associations were legally sanctioned, and tests finally abolished, this idea of *religious competition* acquired little practical importance.

But if freedom of religious association is now recognized, why, it may be asked, should Free Trade in religion be hampered by the State aid implied in the Establishment of a particular Church? Were religion, with its moral influence, of little concern to a State, it might be difficult to answer the above question. But we have seen that a Democratic State depends upon the morality of its members more, even, than any other State.

fluence. I wanted money; I took it. That man tried to prevent me; I killed him. I have never heard of the Ten Commandments or the Lord's Prayer, though I was made to go to a Board School till I was thirteen. I learnt the use of money; I also learnt how men in battles prided themselves on killing each other. I found out that a policeman would 'run me in' for doing either of these things. I did not know why. It only made me more cunning to 'dodge the beaks.' There was no parson and no parish. I once went for a lark into a church and flipt a 'tizzy' out of the bag they handed round. There was a chapel near, but you had to pay for a seat. Your State professes to exist for my welfare, but it has taken no step to supply me with the means or opportunity of finding that which you declare to be the most important element of welfare, some moral and religious training." What would the State's officers reply? "We could not agree as to what were the best means of supplying you with religious sustenance; and, *as we all felt so deeply on the subject*, we thought it best to do nothing!"

We acknowledge in England that it is the duty of the State not to let any one die of starvation, but, because the authorities, or a majority of us, could not agree on what food is

best calculated to morally influence large masses of the nation. Nor must it be supposed that the Established Church, by the term "National," asserts any claim necessarily to include all, or even the majority, of the nation. The term "National," once applied to it to show its independence from the Imperial Papacy, now only implies that it is the "public" Church: publicly recognized by the State in its Law Courts and in its ceremonies, and controlled or supervised by the State on behalf of public interests and public utility. And the reason why such a public recognition and State support is given to a Church is because, as in education, so in religious training and ministration, voluntary efforts are insufficient to meet, not the public demand, perhaps, but the public need. For Dr. Chalmers long ago pointed out that the lack of demand for religion is no proof of its not being wanted. "In all cases," he says, "when the want of anything, instead of weakening the appetite for it, whetted that appetite, it might be best and safest to leave matters to the pure operation of nature. But what made the case of religious destitution peculiar, and prevented any argument grounded on the ordinary operations of commerce being legitimately applied to it, was, that not only did the natural and effective demand fall short of the actual necessity, but *that the*

*demand lessened as the necessity increased, until at last, when the want was greatest, desire for its relief was almost or altogether unfelt."*¹

We have since seen how utterly inadequate the voluntary efforts of both Churchmen and Nonconformists were, even though aided by public grants, to meet the national educational requirements: assuming, then, that the State considers religious training and ministration to be at least as important for its members as purely secular education, can we leave the one to voluntary agencies alone, when such are admittedly inadequate for the other? Can the State, when aware that masses of people will never seek any form of religion or moral training of their own accord, and of the inability of private resources to cope with the wants of great populations hurried and worried with much service,—can it wash its hands of all responsibility, and blandly reply, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Imagine a condemned criminal on the eve of execution addressing the officers of the State as follows:—"What have you done to let me know that I was doing wrong to rob and to murder? My parents never took any trouble to tell me so, nor did you force them to do anything for my training, or take me away from their evil in-

¹ "Life of Dr. Chalmers," vol. i. pp. 455, 456, and vol. ii. p. 410, etc.

fluence. I wanted money ; I took it. That man tried to prevent me ; I killed him. I have never heard of the Ten Commandments or the Lord's Prayer, though I was made to go to a Board School till I was thirteen. I learnt the use of money ; I also learnt how men in battles prided themselves on killing each other. I found out that a policeman would 'run me in' for doing either of these things. I did not know why. It only made me more cunning to 'dodge the beaks.' There was no parson and no parish. I once went for a lark into a church and flipt a 'tizzy' out of the bag they handed round. There was a chapel near, but you had to pay for a seat. Your State professes to exist for my welfare, but it has taken no step to supply me with the means or opportunity of finding that which you declare to be the most important element of welfare, some moral and religious training." What would the State's officers reply ? "We could not agree as to what were the best means of supplying you with religious sustenance ; and, *as we all felt so deeply on the subject*, we thought it best to do nothing" !

We acknowledge in England that it is the duty of the State not to let any one die of starvation, but, because the authorities, or a majority of us, could not agree on what food is

best for a starving man, should we be justified in folding our hands and leaving the pauper to chance charity?

In accepting the responsibility of maintaining an Established Church, *i.e.* a form of public worship, all that the State does is (1) to admit the fact that religion is a great moralizing influence to many; (2) to admit the fact that, if the opportunity is not given to them, large numbers will grow up without any such influence; and (3) to admit the fact that private voluntary agencies will not be capable of ensuring such opportunities. With such facts before it, the State has simply to ask what organization will best supply such opportunities? Assuredly, as an organization, that religious association will be best suited for public work which extends over the whole country, every particle of which is included in some one of the association's districts, within which districts every inhabitant is capable of claiming its ministration and religious offices. This is what the English Church does through its parochial organization. It is not made up of such chance congregations as a particular preacher can collect or a missionary administer to, but of all the inhabitants of that particular district called a "parish"; into which parishes all England is mapped out. Every inhabitant of that district can call upon the parson

in charge for religious help. Nor need a Democratic State, by maintaining it in its public position, be supposed to assert for that Church any superiority over others, or to claim for it a majority, or even to proclaim that the particular doctrines it teaches are the "truth and nothing but the truth." A State has, Burke says, nothing to do with abstract truth or falsehood; "that only which is good for a State is politically true, and that which is evil politically false." The only care which a State need take is to see that such a Church does not teach any doctrines incompatible with its State principles of government and legal supremacy. A Church, so maintained as an "establishment," admits that it must act in conformity with the general laws of the State, and the State, in return for the legal sanction given to the organization of such a Church, may rightly require some guarantee of the Church's efficiency to perform its public duties. Hence it authorizes powers of discipline to be exercised by Ecclesiastical Courts. Nevertheless, the best way to make a man do his duty is to make him feel personal responsibility. A clergyman cannot be a State official whose duty is limited to official regulations. Such a system would kill the spiritual life necessary for the vitality of a clergy. Although, therefore, there will be idle and neglectful parsons here and there, it is better to risk such and to

ensure healthy willing work from the majority, than to make the State responsible for their conduct and to reduce them all to a dead level of officialism. Their independence, too, within due limits, of their congregations frees them from many petty ties and much personal friction.

Nor is any slight thrown on private charitable associations which are left free to carry on the work in their own way. It is a fallacy to suppose that the State-aided or controlled institutions must be the most favoured. The great hospitals supported by voluntary subscriptions are not held to be inferior in position or estimation to workhouse infirmaries. The State's parcel-postmen, again, may have surer incomes and smarter uniforms than Pickford's vanmen, but the latter are freer from regulations, and the private firm may display greater energy and enterprise than the State firm.

At whose cost is this organization termed "the Church" supported? Mainly by private contributions of old granted to the Church, as an institution for public religion, and secured to it by law. Nor does this voluntary support cease. During the last twenty-five years over eighty-one million pounds have been privately subscribed to its support.¹ Since the abolition of compulsory rates and tem-

¹ "The Churchman's Year-Book," 1886, and Letter of F. Burnside, *Times*, Feb. 1.

porary grants for Church building the nation has ceased to be taxed, either from local or imperial sources, for the benefit of the Church. Tithes, also, originally in the nature of a tax on produce, are now but a portion of the private agricultural rents at a proportion exceptionally small, being calculated on the average price of corn and not on the value of the land. The Church has derived no benefit from the increased value of land in towns and manufacturing districts. Disendow the Church, and tithes would be merged in rent, or the rent be remitted by their amount. In neither case would the National Exchequer profit, only private interests, thus showing that this form of Church property is not the State's property in the sense generally attributed to those words, nor does its other property, such as buildings, rectories, or glebes, belong to the State in the same way as post-offices or Government buildings; neither have they ever been leased from the State or surrendered to it, like Crown lands, in return for a handsome civil list. Many clergy, dependent upon glebes, might well wish it were so. To admit that Church property is "public property" does not mean that it may be appropriated by any one for any purpose, but that it is "corporate trust property;" or, more exactly the property of several local corporations called parishes, bishoprics, etc. All corporate pro-

perty is more or less under public control ; firstly, because a corporation can only exist legally by some form of public recognition, such as a Charter or Act of Parliament ; and secondly, because the State alone can enforce the fulfilment of trusts. The Church's trust is a public one, as is that of the railway companies. The ground for State interference is that the property of the particular corporation is being misappropriated for purposes other than those of the original trust. For this cause the State justly overhauls City companies and endowed schools or charities. On the same ground it may deal with Church property. The sole question for it is, Has the Church broken its trust ? Is it misappropriating its funds for purposes alien to their original use ? The Irish Church had, apart from other political reasons, palpably failed in its main purpose of 'protestantizing' Romanists. The English Church was never created for any such direct object. The maintenance of a public form of religion in churches open to all parishioners, and extending throughout the length and breadth of the land—*this* is the main duty entrusted to the Church, and on the strength of which she obtained her endowments.

Doubtless, if religion were held to be an extinct necessity, the State might be entitled to appropriate Church property for other uses, educational

or recreative, moral or material. Failing that assumption, the only alternative claim to interfere would be in order to redistribute such property for the benefit of all religious purposes within Christian limitations. Do Liberationists, however, argue for such a principle of concurrent endowment? or do Nonconformists express any wish to become subservient to the State control which such endowment involves, since they could only receive such funds on trust, not as a gift or *bonus*, while the State would supervise the fulfilment of the trust? No such wish being expressed, we cannot do them the injustice to suppose that all this outcry is to be silenced by a share in the loaves and fishes of an Established Church.

Such disendowment as has taken place has been effected more by too powerful friends than by open enemies of the Church, whose example affords warning rather than encouragement. The members of the great mediæval monasteries, as land-owning corporations, misappropriated Church property for their own benefit; which precedent was followed by Henry VIII., who further misappropriated their property by granting it to rapacious laymen, instead of restoring it to religious purpose; thus imposing upon Church lands the burden of supporting the lay proprietors of great tithes: the commutation of which is rather a relief to, than any disendowment

of, the Church. The powers, again, granted to the Ecclesiastical Commission have only been in aid of the redistribution of some Church property, never of its disendowment.

The example, however, of the appropriation of religious funds as bounties for needy classes seems to be still attractive, and probably must needs remain so as long as human nature is liable to the temptation of self-interest. To throw open the Church's property for fancy redistribution is to invite a babel of philanthropic voices, each asserting that its possessor knows the one infallible method of benefiting mankind in general and some individuals in particular. It is to invite a scramble for legacies to be immediately expended in some futile scheme of promiscuous charity or temporary relief, whereas the whole benefit of great trust funds is their continuing value as permanent resources. Moreover, to grab for one's immediate need stores provided for both ourselves and for others to come is mere greed, only excusable in men unjustifiably starved. How does the establishment of the Church starve any in religious want? It is the cheapest and freest form of religious sustenance. It is an Endowed Church which can give free seats to all. It is an Established Church which can secure free access for all. It is the Minister of an Endowed and Established Parsonage who can

give his time and aid to all, regardless of personal support or sectional favour, for he is not in the pay of a private congregation, but is the administrator of a public trust.

If greed tempts us to disendow, envy may often lurk behind a desire to disestablish. For as Monarchies are liable to pride, and Oligarchies to selfish hate, so Democracies in their efforts to level all to one plane are liable to the promptings of envy. But even if it be virtuous indignation which inspires us at the sight of an over-plump Dean, or too comfortable-looking an Archdeacon, or if a sense of the fitness of things makes the sight of robed Bishops in the House of Lords or Parsons on the magisterial bench seem democratically ridiculous, let us beware of forgetting the thousands of hard-working, kind-hearted, parochial clergy, and the tens of thousands who look to them for temporal aid and spiritual consolation. That these will not be destroyed by Disestablishment is true; but they will be seriously crippled by the blow, and hearts will be broken and lives wasted in the mere rebuilding of organization which might have been more worthily spent in promoting and extending religious society. And all for what? If not for social greed or selfish envy, all for the sake of theoretical perfection! A reform in the representation of the House of Lords and

in local county government would bring about practical social equality between Churchmen and Nonconformists, yet for some dim phantom of religious equality we are asked to put aside the practical value of the Church's *organization*, and to sweep the religious board clean. Might we not as well require trains to go as slow as omnibuses for the sake of theoretical "equality"? The test of an institution nowadays should be its practical utility. As a fact, we know that tens of thousands are better men, and so better citizens, from having had the opportunity of religious training in the Established Church; and that hundreds of thousands who are neither able nor desirous of setting up religious associations for themselves, gladly take the opportunity, when it is at hand, of joining an established institution which stimulates and encourages the moral sense as well as soothes the feelings. No precedence is claimed for such an Established Church. It is merely found to be the most practical organization for expressing public religious worship and for carrying on public religious association. No slight is cast thereby on those who prefer to form their own religious societies. Voluntary churches may be as much respected and enjoy more freedom in many ways. But can stray individuals, however virtuous, or chance associations, however enthusiastic, hope to carry on so

permanently and universally the work of permeating the national conscience with the sense of righteousness, temperance, purity, as the organized establishment of the Church? To be ready and open at all times to absorb new populations and to meet the religious requirements of new districts, *to keep up the level of the national conscience*, and to feed freely the sense of public morality,—this is the duty of the Established Church, and the reason of its existence as a publicly recognized institution. Why should not the State use this powerful motor to hand? If it will not, let but one soul cry in vain for that light which the Established minister of a free Endowed Church could, but which voluntary aid from lack of means or opportunity could not, have given, and who shall answer for the loss of that soul? Social action involves heavy responsibility. Can we *afford* to throw away such a powerful instrument for good as this public organization for promoting morality and moulding humanity?

Nor need Churchmen fear lest their Church should, by accepting such a public duty, be submitting itself to any direct right of interference from a secularly minded State. On the contrary, it is just because the State feels nowadays quite incompetent to decide on matters of faith or worship or to impose Acts of Uniformity and yet

acknowledges their moralizing influence, that it delegates to an already existing Church this duty of carrying out a system of "public worship." The sole provision which the State under such circumstances need make is to see (1) that this Church teaches no doctrines antagonistic to the civil supremacy of the State in all temporal matters, and (2) to see that its organization is sufficiently adapted to carry out this object of "public worship." This may be adequately provided for by delegating to the Church powers of "Home Rule" on matters of doctrine, discipline, and ritual, which could only come into force by the *sanction* of the State, though owing their *creation* to the free expressions of need and of consent among organized Church bodies. Such action would realize in the most practical way Mazzini's ideal of "a Free Church in a Free State," whereas to cut the Church adrift altogether might easily bring into being "a Freer Church," indeed, but one more likely to be "against"—not "in"—a "Freer State."

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